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THE

METHODIST PROTESTANT PULPIT.

SERMONS:

PREACHED BEFORE THE

MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

FROM 1858 TO 1871 INCLUSIVE.

BALTIMORE:
WM. J C. DULANY & CO., PUBLISHERS.
1871.

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THE METHODIST PROTESTANT PULPIT.

PREFACE.

To the Members

of the

Methodist Protestant Church:

Having seen and felt the want of a revival in our Church literature, we have, at the suggestion of a live minister (and Ex-President) of the Maryland Annual Conference, consented to publish this work.

One of our objects is to make it a *Test Case!* If *the people* take hold of it—showing a disposition to sustain our own literature—if the ministers will *push* it, and *show* their approval by *acts*, we promise to do *our* part in publishing such works (at our own risk and expense,) as may offer, and are deemed advisable, and advantageous, to the Church at large.

Without a proper literature of its own, any church is incomplete — in fact, is deficient in its first principles.

We regret that sermons for 1857 and 1868, are not in this volume. The fault does not rest with us.

THE PUBLISHERS.

CONTENTS.

PAGE.

I. THE MOTIVES, WORK AND REWARD OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.
Rev. Silas B. Southerland, D. D. 1858. - - - - 1

II. TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS.
Rev. Lawrence W. Bates, D. D. 1859. - - - - - 14

III. THE CONFLICT AND THE TRIUMPH.
Rev. James K. Nichols, D. D. 1860. - - - - - 30

IV. THE PERSONALITY, DEITY AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
Rev. Daniel W. Bates. 1861. - - - - - - - 56

V. THE ORIGIN, WORK AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.
Rev. John Roberts. 1862. - - - - - - - - 70

VI. CHRIST AND HIS SUFFERING.
Rev. D. Evans Reese, D. D. 1863. - - - - - 96

VII. THE PREACHER: HIS AUTHORITY AND WORK.
Rev. John J. Murray, D. D. 1864. - - - - - 106

VIII. "THAT I MAY WIN CHRIST."
Rev. Abraham S. Eversole, M. D. 1865. - - - 120

IX. CHRIST AND HIS MINISTERS.
Rev. James M. Elderdice. 1866. - - - - - 133

PAGE.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.
Rev. Augustus Webster, D. D. - - - - - - 152

LABORERS TOGETHER WITH GOD.
Rev. J. Thomas Murray. 1869. - - - - - - 166

XII. THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.
Rev. William C. Lipscomb. 1870. - - - - - - 183

XIII. BRINGING SOULS TO CHRIST.
Rev. R. Scott Norris. 1871. - - - - - - - 197

XIV. THE SUBLIMITY AND SUPERIORITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.
Rev. Levi R. Reese. - - - - - - - - - 216

XV. THE SEASONS, THE SINGERS, AND THEIR SONGS.
Rev. Josiah Varden. 1861. - - - - - - 227

The Motives, Work, and Reward of the Christian Ministry.

CONFERENCE SERMON, MARCH 10TH, 1858.

By Rev. S. B. Southerland, D. D.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder; and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.—1 Peter v: 1, 2, 3, 4.

To instruct and encourage those of interests, pursuits, and responsibilities identical with his own, the Apostle describes the motives, the work, and the reward of a faithful shepherd of the flock of Christ.

Called, as I have been, to occupy the pulpit in the opening services of this assembling of the Conference, there have occurred to me, with especial interest, these several themes of affectionate and solemn apostolical exhortation. Brethren, I pray you honor me in the attempt to discuss the subject by your patience and your prayers.

As a graceful preliminary to his inspired counsel, St. Peter modestly waives the high prerogatives of his apostleship, in virtue of which he might speak under the form and with the sanctions of positive authority. He prefers to exhort his associates of the

ministry as a fellow-laborer in the cause so dear to them all.

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder." Do *they* know what it is to be divinely impelled to devote time, talents, toil, and even life itself, to the eternal interests of an imperiled but infatuated world? *He* fully participates in the experience. He has left all he possessed, and foregone all that he might have attained, for the sake of the Gospel. Do *they* suffer the sacrifices and endure the sorrows entailed upon the early adherents of a crucified Master and a despised religion? These afflictions are *his*, likewise. Ay, the storm has pelted him more pitilessly; the prominence of an earlier discipleship and of a more eminent position has devoted him to sterner encounters and greater perils. Peter, the Galilean, the impetuous, zealous Peter — how could *he* avoid the observation or escape the spleen of his vindictive countrymen? He was by far too striking a character to be unnoticed in the crusade fiercely waged against Christianity. Had he not been with the Nazarene always and everywhere — in Jerusalem, in the villages, on the highways of sea and shore, in the solitudes of prayer-retirement, and amid the throngs who listened to the teaching and beheld the wonders of the Son of God? Even that scene in the hall of Caiaphas — the one dark spot of his discipleship — would largely contribute to his Christian publicity and single him out for intenser persecution.

"A witness of the sufferings of Christ." Here he touches a tenderer chord and awakes a deeper sensibility. Unblest themselves in a personal intercourse with the incarnated Redeemer, yet owning as their master-passion an adoring love for His person and

character, with what charmed interest would Peter's fellow-elders regard one who had known the Man of Sorrows and been an eye-witness of His toils and tears! Next to the privilege of immediate contact with Himself, would be communion and association with a contemporary, an acquaintance, a friend of the Lord. And their brother-minister who now addresses them was not only a personal follower and honored apostle of their common Saviour, but he had beheld some of the most touching scenes of His mysterious woes. With what minuteness of detail, with what vividness of description, and with what bursts of emotion would he picture the occurrences, so memorable and so mournful! Surely they would crowd around their speaker, and with riveted eyes and swelling breasts hold their very breath in rapt attention as he portrayed the Garden prayer and agony, the abrupt entrance of the Chief Priest's minions, the infamous kiss of the betrayer, the rough hands of arrest, and then the quick, vengeful retaliation of his own sword upon the foremost of the ruffian band!

"And also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." From allusions of melting pathos the Apostle suddenly passes to those of highest triumph. On wings of faith and hope he is borne away from the present gloom to the future splendor of the Church; from the fierce fires of the saints to the complete termination of their conflicts; from the withdrawn personal presence of their risen and glorified Master, to His visible return in the clouds of heaven, when —

> Beneath His pierced hand the world shall bow,
> And all earth's diadems gleam upon His brow.

In the Apostle's computation, space and time are annihilated. Already in confidence and assurance he "partakes" of the glory of the enthroned servants of Jesus Christ. With him the future of sense is the present of faith. He anticipates and enjoys the heavenly state; the night of time has vanished, and eternity's morning finds him once more with Jesus, and at his enduring home.

So much for the preliminary of the text. I now proceed to a brief consideration of its essential points.

I. THE MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD PROMPT TO A PARTICIPATION IN THE HONORS AND TOILS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

"Not by constraint, but willingly." The hazards by which the ministerial office was begirt in the first ages were quite enough to render the post undesirable. And if, superadded to the perils of the place, there should be realised, in any given instance, the absence of conviction inwrought by the Spirit of God, pointing to the work as a positive personal duty, other and powerful means would have to be employed before a man, thus uncalled of Heaven, would be likely to seek such a sphere of responsibility and danger. But with purest motives these very means might be brought into requisition. The Church, anxious for enlargement and usefulness, and supposing one of its number to be especially qualified for a standard-bearer, might constrain him, in opposition to his own inclinations, to seize the banner of Christ and hold it bravely up amid its bitter foes. Now this interference with the Divine prerogatives the Apostle positively forbids. "Take the oversight of the flock of God," he enjoins, if you take it at all, "not by constraint, but willingly."

In our own times cruel bonds and violent deaths do not ordinarily await the servants of Christ, thereby inclining them to shrink from the prominence of the ministry; yet the constraint of men in making ministers may be exerted in well-meant but mistaken zeal to benefit the cause of religion. It is possible for the direct and satisfactory call of Heaven to be substituted by the judgment of partial friends.

Take a case. It may be that the subject of the kind intentions of his brethren has attracted notice by the general elements of his character. Intellectual endowments are combined with piety and zeal. Thus promising, he is urged to turn his thoughts towards a more extended sphere of usefulness than is afforded within the limits of private Christian profession. To strengthen the convictions and to increase the interests of his advisers, there is at hand the fact of deficiency in ministerial supply. The fields are white unto the harvest, while the laborers who have borne the heat and burden of the day are either falling, sickle in hand, or, overcome by infirmities or disease, are retiring in sadness from work they are incompetent now to perform.

Still, the brother himself may have no decisive controlling impression that the Lord of the harvest has assigned him the suggested work; and if he ultimately enter upon it, it may be only in compliance with what he esteems the counsels of more competent judges. In such case he leaves a position of undisputed usefulness for another of a problematical character at best. It would indeed be a happiness to know that instances, under these circumstances, have not existed in which the bright private walks of Zion have been forsaken for positions of comparative public inutility.

Talented, holy, Heaven-designated ministers are indispensable to the Church and the world. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" And, unquestionably, every proper degree of encouragement should be afforded our promising young men who, from the impelling of the Holy Ghost, "willingly" seek for places at our side in the vast and sublime work of the ministry of reconciliation.

But it should not be overlooked that there are useful and therefore honorable stations in the Church other than those of the ministry. Piety, zeal, and intelligence are as much a necessity of an efficient private membership as of efficient pulpit laborers. In a Church organization like ours especially, where the entire government is as freely participated in by laymen as by their pastors, lay gifts and graces may not only find ample scope for exertion, but are absolutely essential to the general prosperity. The genius of our organization, and the spirit and design of Christianity, alike require men in every department of religious enterprise and toil who are capable of appreciating the blessings of a free Church and a free government. Moreover, they demand men who are worthy of religion and liberty: men who are competent to illustrate the one by holy living, and to defend and maintain the other, if need be, by freely suffering for its sake.

Nor is the pastor's work to be entered upon "for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." Regarded as a purely religious appointment, created and perpetuated by the Head of the Church to subserve the enduring interests of humanity, it were impossible to overrate the importance of a living ministry. One who well understood all its bearings, and who, to his own personal honor as well as to the vast ad-

vantage of mankind, participated in its responsibilities, exclaimed, "I magnify my office." And that eminent civil ruler correctly apprehended the subject when he replied to a ministerial candidate's application for place in the government, "You already have a higher office than any at my disposal."

Viewed, however, in the light of a mere means of maintenance, and entered into with reference to its pecuniary remuneration, it is among the poorest of all callings. To say nothing of the just displeasure and sure retributions of Heaven for the daring presumption of selecting the awful office, not only unbidden, but assuming its sacred functions with no higher motive than that of its earthly emolument — any given amount of intellectual energy cannot possibly be devoted to a more profitless pursuit. And I may add, the temptations of lucre are not very likely to stain the purity of *our* ministerial ranks.

"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." The office of a Christian ambassador is one of influence. In the nature of things this is as it should be. As a Divine institution, originating in the mercy of God and contemplating everlasting results, it is commended to human reverence by the highest conceivable considerations.

A minister without the love and confidence of those he serves, though his talents were angel-bright, would be shorn of his strength. And when I speak of the respect and affection with which he should be regarded, I do not mean that he is simply honored with one Christian's appreciation of another. Much more than this is demanded by the relation he sustains and the interests with which he is entrusted. He is not only the brother of those

who attend his ministry, but their pastor, and a shepherd of the fold of God. To be present at his ministrations, to co-operate in his plans of usefulness, and to dispense to him a liberal support, are matters of plain and positive duty; but to stop short with these is to evince a lamentable inappreciation of a direct appointment of Heaven. A Christian pastor is something more than an appointee of the Conference or an employee of the congregation. Said an inspired minister, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."

But a minister should not "abuse his power in the Gospel." He should not usurp lordship over the heritage of God. It is bad enough for place and position in civil government to be used, not for the common weal, but as the means of oppressing the governed; nevertheless it is far worse when the influence conferred upon religious teachers for the edification of the Church is perverted to the ends of personal selfishness and ambition. A call to preach the Gospel is not a call to governmental authority over the saints of God, even though their respect for the ministerial office should prompt submission to the exercise of usurped pastoral prerogatives. On the contrary, such a call does impose the duty of "being ensamples" to the flock in every Christian virtue.

II. The peculiar work of the Ministerial office. "Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof."

This was Peter's own commission. You remem-

ber that impressive interview of the risen Master with His disciple on the shore of Tiberias. Three several and successive times did Jesus probe him with the question of supreme love and devotedness to Himself, and thrice was the answer met by the tender and solemn injunction, "Feed my sheep."

Here, all who are under-shepherds to the Church have their whole official duty plainly indicated. I cannot enter at large into the discussion of this part of the subject. The field is very inviting. But brief hints, to be elaborated, if you will, by yourselves, for the present must suffice.

"*Preach the Word.*" The pulpit is consecrated to a single theme. God has put immortal honor upon the preaching of the Gospel. "For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Politics — the principles and details of civil government — may find appropriate theatre at the hustings or in legislative halls; science may open up its wonders, and philosophy may legitimately commune with men at the precincts devoted to their culture and dissemination; but to the Christian pulpit a vastly different work is assigned. The pulpit is a place where heaven in its majesty and holiness, and earth in its nothingness and guilt, meet face to face; a place where God in the person of His ambassador states His controversy with the world, and summons dying mortals to accept the boon of forgiveness and love, or, as the consequence of their contumacy and incorrigibleness, condemns them to spend an eternity amid the shades and sorrows of the damned.

Other themes, therefore, in pulpit ministrations than the God who made us, Christ who atoned for

us, the heaven we may gain, and the hell to which we are exposed, are impertinences inexcusable and wicked.

"*Feed the flock.*" The fancy, the taste, or the prejudices of our hearers may at times desire that which is not bread. But bread, and bread alone, the truth of God, should be the staple of our dealing. The doctrines, the promises, the threatenings of the Bible, in their application to the soul and in their appeal to the understanding, the conscience, the hopes and the fears of men — these constitute the subject-matter of our mission to humanity.

If we are fulfilling our appointment as "ensamples to the flock"; if we have pastors "willingly and of a ready mind"; if we are really *in* our work, having a due appreciation of its intrinsic, eternal grandeur and importance, we will address ourselves to the duties involved with an interest in the result that shall fascinate, overpower, and possess every faculty and function of our being.

To love our neighbor as ourself is binding alike on all, whether of private or public station; but the minister who, next to God, loves his work, keeps every statute of the law and every precept of the Gospel sacred and inviolate. His affectionateness, his zeal, his fearlessness, wherever and whenever duty commands or privilege invites, challenges earth's profoundest respect, and wins from serene intelligences approving smiles; while Heaven's eternal throne, in anticipation of final reward, cries, Well done!

III. THE FAITHFUL MINISTER'S PROMISED REWARD. "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

It is assumed that Christ will appear: assumed, because it is the subject of so many direct and solemn pledges; and because the antecedents of His power and truth furnish the most ample basis for the hopes of His expecting friends.

The resurrection of our Lord was the first grand demonstration of the Messiahship, and the wonders of Pentecost were the second. Both of these were subjects of express promise; but there yet remains another promise, and that is His return to earth, as the final confirmation of His claims to universal homage and love.

Thus far — from Eden's first prediction to the gloom of the Cross, to the glory of His vacant sepulchre and to the startling prodigy of the fiery tongues — His promise has not failed. Only one other link, and Heaven's golden chain will have forever made sure the glorious destiny of the people of God. And that link will be supplied. "He shall appear."

Has it never occurred to your reflections that earth, though marred and deformed by sin and crime, must have a peculiar interest to Jesus? It was here He was born; it was here He suffered and died; it was here He arose from the dead; and it was here He parted from His disciples, with the promise of returning to them again. Hence, interest in old familiar scenes — scenes endeared to Him by associations grand and tender and awful — and express, immutable promise, combine to render it certain that yonder heavens will open, revealing Him in clouds descending who was once for favored sinners slain.

And when He shall appear, all who have suffered in His service or labored in His cause will receive

ten thousand-fold and everlasting compensations for all the hardships of time. Especially will His faithful ministers, of every age and name, be awarded honors, compared with which the jeweled crowns of earth will then seem the rubbish remains of a worn-out world.

In view of this result, my brethren, allow me to say with the Apostle, The ministers which are among you I exhort, who am also a minister, and a partaker with you of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God. To each one of you, and to myself, as perhaps needing the stimulus more than any, I would affectionately and solemnly urge —

Up to thy Master's work! for thou art sworn
To do His bidding till the hand of death
Strike off thine armor. Thy deep vow denies
To hoard earth's gold or truckle for its smiles,
Or bind its blood-stained laurel on thy brow.
A nobler field is thine. The soul! the soul!
That is thy province — that mysterious thing
Which hath no limit from the walls of sense,
No chill from hoary time, with pale decay
No fellowship, but shall stand forth unchanged,
Unscathed amid the resurrection fires,
To bear its boundless lot of good or ill.
Thy business is with that which cannot die;
Whose subtle thought the untraveled universe
Spans on swift wing, from slumbering ages sweeps
Their buried treasures, scans the vault of heaven,
Poises the orbs of light, points boldly out
Their trackless pathway through the blue expanse,
Foils the red comet in its flaming speed,
And aims to read the secrets of its God.
Yet thou, a son of clay, art privileged
To make thy Saviour's image brighter still
In this majestic soul!
Give God the praise
That thou art counted worthy, and lay down
Thy lip in dust. Bethink thee of its loss;
For He whose sighs on Olivet, whose pangs
On Calvary, best speak its priceless worth,
Saith that it may be lost. Should it sin on
Till the last hour of grace and penitence
Is meted out, ah! what would it avail

Though the whole world, with all its pomp and power
And plumage, were its own? What were its gain
If the swift hour-glass of this life should fail,
And leave remorse no grave, despair no hope?
Up, blow thy trumpet, sound the loud alarm
To those who sleep in Zion! Boldly warn
To 'scape their condemnation, o'er whose head
Age after age of misery hath rolled,
Who from their prison-house look up and see
Heaven's golden gate, and to its watchmen cry,
"What of the night?" while the dread answer falls
With fearful echo down the unfathomed depths:
"Eternity!"
Should one of those lost souls
Amid its tossings utter forth thy name
As one who might have plucked it from the pit,
Thou man of God! would there not be a burst
Of tears in heaven?
Oh live the life of prayer,
The life of faith in the meek Son of God,
The life of tireless labor for His sake:
So may the angel of the covenant bring
Thee to thy home in bliss, with many a gem
To glow forever in thy Master's crown.

A Sermon,

PREACHED TO THE MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH, AT THE OPENING OF ITS THIRTY-FIRST SESSION, IN GEORGETOWN STATION, D. C., MARCH 9TH, 1859.

By Rev. L. W. Bates, D. D.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."—2 Cor. iv: 7.

The Apostle, in this and the preceding chapter, is magnifying the Gospel and vindicating his fidelity in the discharge of his duty as one of its ministers. In the passage before us he speaks of the Gospel as a treasure:—"We have this treasure in earthen vessels," &c. And in the discussion of the text, we propose to notice, first, this feature, and observe that—

I. The Gospel is *a treasure of knowledge.* In Christ, says Paul, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."—*Col.* ii: 3.

Knowledge is prized by all; even the indolent esteem and desire it, though they will not labor for its attainment. But of all knowledge within the compass of man's intellect, that of the Gospel of God has the pre-eminence.

Human science may traverse the whole world and entertain and benefit us by its investigations and

demonstrations; climbing to the mountain's summit, penetrating the deep, mysterious glen, or sweeping over the enchanting landscape, to describe the stately tree, the tender plant, the blushing flower, or to gather the delicious fruits of this land of ours; it may ride upon the ocean's wave, or plunge into its fathomless depths, to tell of its winds and tides, or portray the finny tribes and pearly inhabitants of its coral caves; it may dig into the very bowels of the earth, to reveal its varied strata and bring forth its precious treasures; or soar to the illumined heavens, in which the numerous stars roll in endless spheres, and count the number, and tell the distance, and compute the velocity of those immense globes of light and heat that bless our earth with life and beauty. But what is this, great and grand and wondrous though it be, that human science does? It only speaks of the *works* of God.

But this divine science, this "treasure" of knowledge, rises *above* the world, leaves suns and stars behind, and reveals to us the nature of God Himself: that He is an infinite, uncaused, self-existent spirit, "inhabiting eternity, and covering Himself with light as with a garment"; that He is everywhere, but not everything; that from Him cometh all things, but that He is distinct from all things; that He fills the universe, but is not mingled with the universe; that He is neither divided nor extended nor multiplied, but essentially present everywhere; that His wisdom is infinite, His power unlimited, His justice immutable, His truth infallible; and that, although "He sitteth upon the circle of the heavens, and the inhabitants of the earth are to Him as grasshoppers," yet supreme goodness pervades His whole nature, and He is the great inex-

haustible source of being and blessedness to us; that—

> "There is none like Him,—so great, so high,
> He bows Himself to view the sky;
> And yet, with condescending grace,
> Looks down upon the human race.
> He hears the uncomplaining moan
> Of those who sit and weep alone;
> He lifts the mourner from the dust,
> And saves the poor that in Him trust."

Human science, by its anatomical investigations of this earthly house, may define "how fearfully and wonderfully we are made;" and by its years of experience and experiments describe the thousand diseases to which the body is subject; and point out the thousand remedial agents to which it has access as a defence against the destroyer; but what is this, however desirable to the natural man or necessary to the physical world, that human knowledge does? Its highest attainments can only preserve from the ravages of disease the physical man, that must soon decay by the failing energies of his own nature, and prolong a life that may be embittered by casualties over which he has no control.

But this divine science, this "treasure" of knowledge, defines the living, immortal inhabitant of this mask of clay, revealing the ennobling truth that man came from the invisible, incomprehensible God, is impressed with His image and destined to live forever; that he is a spirit invested with magnificent intellectual and moral faculties and aspirations that nothing can supply or satisfy but the glorious Being from whom he sprang; revealing the humiliating truth that man's beauty is marred by depravity and his soul is stained by sin; appalling him with the startling disclosure that his unholy passions and

vicious affections are constantly involving him in error and betraying him into transgression, and that "God cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance," and therefore holds him responsible for his iniquities, and has declared that "the wages of sin is death," and that "the soul that sinneth shall die;" thus teaching him that he is a *condemned* sinner; and then revealing the sublime and cheering truth that the only begotten of the Father, "by the grace of God, tasted death for every man," and that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" thus teaching him that he is a *redeemed* sinner. This, then, is a *treasure of knowledge*, from the fact that it rises superior to human ken; describes the spiritual maladies of man's moral nature, and points out the infallible remedies that will restore to perfect health and preserve from eternal death; develops the necessities of man's immortal nature, and directs him to the great fountain of being as an adequate supply to all his aspirations and an inexhaustible subject to his contemplations.

Human knowledge may have wrought out many inventions, laid various plans, perfected numerous schemes by which man may elevate himself to social honor, grasp external riches, and secure unparalleled enjoyment — to recline in ease, luxuriate in abundance, and triumph in glory, and, like a crowned conqueror, span the earth and "gain the whole world"; but this treasure of knowledge unveils "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" — the home of the saints, where "the spirits of just men made perfect" shall be enraptured with ineffable glory and luxuriate in "a fulness of joy and pleasures that are for evermore." Human philosophy may explain the

laws that govern the winds and tide, the lightning's glare and thunder's roar, the earth's motion and the sun's light and heat; but the most profound, sublime philosophy that ever fell on mortal ear, was taught an inquiring intellect, or realised by a human heart, is, "God *so* loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Human truth may teach a man how to preserve his health, secure social enjoyment, or obtain extensive influence; but a greater truth than all this world can originate is, "If a man die, he shall live again."

II. The Gospel is a *treasure of enjoyment.*

The pursuit of earthly enjoyment is precarious, and ever subject to accidents that may at any moment thwart our purpose and blast our hopes. The most untiring industry, the boldest enterprise, the most dexterous stratagem may alike fail, and find that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor riches to men of understanding," for no plan ever yet devised will infallibly lead to success; and the pure and unworthy are both constrained to confess that "time and chance happen to all."

But this is a *treasure* of enjoyment in that it is equally accessible to the "Greek and Jew, the Barbarian and Scythian, the bond and free." The opulent may have it with their other possessions, and the destitute may obtain it to soothe them in their degradation. The pursuit of this treasure is sure to possess it. None seek it in vain. It may be obtained in the palace or the hovel, in the forests or the fields, in the highways or the hedges, on the land or the sea, in health or in sickness, while living or while dying. It may be found anywhere from the cradle to the grave.

Earthly enjoyment is unsatisfying. When obtained, it does not prove to be what it promised in the distance; and while it is true that of the multitudes struggling for earthly good but a few are successful in its attainment, it is equally true that the few successful aspirants find their expectations disappointed, that "distance lends enchantment to the view," and the prize depreciates by possession. Thus the pleasures of earth ever fail to satisfy the human heart, and "man never *is*, but always *to be* blest."

But this treasure of enjoyment, however desirable it may seem in the distance, however high the expectations of the seeker, the charms of its possession ever surpass the attractions of its pursuit. For "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His spirit, and all things are ours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are ours; and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's." This alone exceeds the most lively imaginations, this alone surpasses the most extensive description, this alone can give us a "fulness of joy," this alone can give us complete satisfaction. It is a "peace that flows like a river," a light that shines into the darkest chambers of the mind, a hand that plays upon the sweetest strings of the heart, a spirit that awakens the tenderest sensibilities of the nature. It is a stream of purest joy flowing into the soul, causing a gush of satisfaction to well up in the heart, inspiring the song —

"Tongue cannot express the sweet comfort and peace
Of a soul blessed with Jesus' love."

It is an influence hallowed, soft and sweet, that refines and elevates the affections and sentiments; so that, possessed of this treasure, the beggar in his rags, the captive in his chains, the prisoner in his cell, or the sick man on his bed, may exclaim, "Earth hath no sorrow that the Gospel cannot cure."

Earthly enjoyment is also of uncertain duration. The appalling warning is ever ringing in our ears, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." And dangers press on every side, ready to strike from the hand the cup lifted to the lips; and the toil of years may be swept away by the accident of an hour. And "he who thinketh he standeth may well take heed lest he fall," for the most vigilant care may not prevent his fall. But if the casualties incident to earthly possessions despoil him not of his joys, the mutations of time will make their impress upon man himself; and in age or sickness, his feelings and tastes will so change that that which formerly attracted will then repel, and that which formerly gave pleasure will then produce disgust; and in any event, death at no distant day will close his eyes upon all of earth and rob him of his joy.

But this *spiritual* treasure knows no change but that of increase. Rust cannot mar it, moths cannot fret it, thieves cannot break through and steal it, nor oppression nor fraud wrest it from our grasp. The fire cannot burn it, nor the waves swallow it up, nor the whirlwind sweep it away. Thank God! whatever else we may be called upon to part with, to *this* we can hold fast, and it shall be our chief joy. It is suited, too, to all conditions of human life; to the rich and the poor, the aged and the young, the living and the dying. That poor man had it when he was

rich; he has it now. It was precious then; it is precious still. Then it humbled; now it elevates him. That old man had it in his youth; he has it now. It was precious then; it is precious still. Then it was the joy of his life; now it is the solace of his declining years. "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." What! cannot death separate us from this treasure? No! no! death will only develop it into an "eternal weight of glory."

III. We notice that this *treasure is in vessels.*

No man is *born* a Christian, much less a minister of the Gospel; but is made such. Vessels, you know, are not natural but artificial instruments. Gospel ministers are not the authors, but merely the receivers of this treasure. The origin, the mine is God; we are but the recipients, the vessels. We have no share in the authorship of the Gospel, not only as a system of religion as a whole, but not even in its minutiæ, in the smallest point, the most unimportant principle. We have no more authorship in the Gospel than the astronomer has in the solar system, the geologist in the stone-quarry or fossil deposits, the botanist in the plants and flowers. The doctrines we originate are so far from being Gospel that they are not even truth, but fallacy, falsehood. Paul says, "For I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you." What a check to human pride and commendation! It is true that vessels are not of uniform capacity; some are less, some are greater. Thus Gospel ministers have gifts

and graces of different degrees and excellences; but they are all *vessels* still. There was some cause for self-gratulation and exaltation in Faust's invention of printing, and in Fulton's invention of steam navigation, and in Morse's invention of the electric telegraph; but Christian ministers are to give *all* the glory to God. But may we not be entitled to some claims to the honor of *discovery*, as Newton and Columbus? I verily believe not; for though we are necessitated and bound to exercise our minds in earnest, honest investigation, yet it is still the office of God's Spirit to enlighten the mind and reveal the truth; and perhaps some of us would have more correct and enlarged views of the Gospel if we would secure a greater influence of the Spirit before we engage in its study. To properly understand the Gospel by Paul, or Peter, or James, or John, we must first catch the Spirit that inspired them. The Holy Spirit is as appropriate in the study as in the pulpit; in reading the Bible as in offering our prayers. *We* are no more privileged than was Moses to say, "Must *we* fetch forth water out of this rock?" God always keeps us dependent upon Himself; and with Paul, we only "deliver that which we have received." And whenever we successfully preach the word of God, may the recollection that we are but vessels still keep us humble; "For who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. Paul planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

But it would be well for us to notice that vessels are not only intended for reception, but also for *effusion*. That which Paul "received of the Lord, he

delivered" to the world. If God has committed the Gospel to any of us, it is our duty to dispense it to others. If it be sinful presumption in a man to run, not being sent, a woe indeed must fall upon him who being called refuses to go. Let us ever be observant of the motions of the Spirit, and prompt and faithful in yielding to their indications, whatever difficulties or attractions may seek to deter us therefrom; and thank God that so far from this treasure becoming impaired or lessened by imparting, our own joys are heightened and our own hopes are brightened proportionately to our faithfulness in this ministry of the "Gospel of reconciliation."

IV. This Gospel is in "*earthen* vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us."

When God gave "the law by the disposition of angels," He commited it to *precious* vessels. But He hath committed His Gospel, not to precious vessels, cherubim, thrones, dominions and seraphim, but to men, *earthen* vessels. When the instrument is apparent and the motive power invisible, men are liable to attribute effects to the second cause instead of the first. Therefore, if the propagation of the Gospel and the establishment of the Christian Church had been committed to angels, their superior nature would have been likely to produce the belief that their own power was adequate to the task, and thus God would have been robbed of the glory due to Himself alone When Peter and John healed the lame man by the power of Jesus' name, the people crowded around them in amazement, as though their holiness and power had restored him to soundness: When the means used is far inferior to the effect

produced, we instinctively look somewhere else for the efficient cause; and when an agent acts, the weaker the instrument by which he acts the stronger the evidence of his skill and power. The inappropriateness and inefficiency of Moses' rod to bring forth water from the rock, and of Joshua's ram's horn to overthrow the walls of Jericho, gave infallible evidence of God's agency. And when publicans, fishermen, and tentmakers — men of low degree — so successfully preach the Gospel as did the Apostles, the power is evidently of God, and not of man; evidencing "that He has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty."

"That the *excellency* of the power might be of God."

There is a peculiar emphasis in this word "excellency" that strikes my mind with great force :—"excellency of power," *i. e.* a power *excelling* all other power.

The Gospel has ever had to contend with worldly interest, national pride, religious prejudice, and the depravity of human nature; and skepticism of every hue and falsehood of every grade have opposed each step of its progression. But it has ever proven itself to be a mysterious energy, a living principle, with an action, an efficacy, a power capable of overcoming all difficulties and invading all opposition. From the time the Gospel first fell from the lips of "Him who spake as never man spake," empires, kingdoms, and tribes have arrayed themselves against it, the laws condemned it, and persecution pursued it. But whether its disciples were proscribed by special enactment, their property confiscated, and they degraded to be a mock and a by-word and abandoned by the protecting law; or de-

stroyed by cruel persecution, tortured at the stake and hung upon the gibbet, parents betrayed by their children and children deserted by their parents, compelled to seek refuge in the caves and forests, or thousands butchered in a single day, it has continued to move onward and triumph. Though fearful edicts have been passed, prohibitory of its promulgation, as a "still, small voice" it has dared to intrude, until gaining strength by its burning zeal, in trumpet tones it has proclaimed "the truth as it is in Jesus." And thus it has been struggling and conquering, sending forth its heavenly notes from land to land; not only echoing through the wilds of Africa, but falling in music tones upon the long inaccessible empire of the Chinese. Alexander, Cæsar, and Bonaparte founded empires; but the dynasty of the first did not survive the life of its founder, that of Cæsar was maintained but a short time, and Napoleon's passed away ere he had ceased to live. Mohammed established a religion, and left it enforced by the laws and defended by the sword; but its sphere has ever been well-nigh circumscribed by the boundaries of its original limits, and is so on the wane that its most credulous votaries are apprehensive that it will soon be superseded by the victories of the Cross. And while empires have fallen, kingdoms crumbled to naught, nations passed away, false religions been weakened, and infidelity refuted and abashed, the Gospel has been gathering strength, increasing in its conquests and triumphing in its victories, in spite of the opposition of the combined world. No system of philosophy, politics, or religion ever contended with such universal and gigantic opposition; and yet nothing has successfully repelled the Gospel. Who

could invest the Gospel with this *living* principle, this *excelling* power, but God? And though the external opposition to the Gospel has not been greater than the internal, prompted by the depravity of human nature, yet it has commanded the reverence of the loftiest intellects and secured the homage of the proudest hearts. This is the power alone that extends alike to the highest and the lowest, humbling the one and exalting the other, influencing all dispositions and reaching all conditions, changing and sanctifying all principles of the heart and correcting all actions of the life. This is the power alone that can win the miser from his gold, the spendthrift from his prodigality, the ambitious from his aspirations, the licentious from his cups, the exasperated from his vengeance, the oppressed from his despondency, the infidel from his unbelief, and the blasphemer from his sacrilege. This is the *excelling* power that can make the rich man grateful and the poor man contented — that can "change the leopard's spots and the Ethiopian's skin." Other powers may chain the lion or beard him in his den, but *this* can change his nature and make him lie down with the lamb. Other powers may arrest the hand of vengeance and save the victim from his foe, may force the enraged man to desist from his revenge upon his enemy; but *this* power can make a man *love* his enemy. This is the power that changed the blaspheming, persecuting Saul of Tarsus into the humble, self-sacrificing Paul to the Gentiles; that changed the cowardly, profane Peter of Pilate's hall into the intrepid, constant martyr of the Roman cross.

If the fact that we are but vessels should keep us humble, the fact that the power is of God should

give us *courage.* Although we may be plain and unpretending, and feel our incompetency to the great and glorious calling before us, yet He who can work by small means as well as great, can work by us. The performance of duty is our part; the result, the *success,* is God's part. If He has called us to this work and we faithfully perform it, leaving the event to Him, though the Church be cold and the world impenitent, the success will be certain. Let us ever carry God with us into the sacred desk, remembering that the power is from Him; and then shall our words be living words, and the truth we utter burn its way into the hearts of the people, and the "pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in our hands." He that directed the stone from David's sling, delivered Israel by Moses' hand, convicted the conscience of Felix by the Apostle's word, and converted three thousand by Peter's sermon, can give success great and glorious to the feeblest among us. Go on then, ye blood-besprinkled band: "whose feet are so beautiful upon the mountains, as ye publish peace and proclaim good tidings, saying unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" Go on, ye earthen vessels, in the name of Jesus go; and though death be on your faces, with life on your lips, ye shall glorify God! And why should our spirits languish or our hands hang down, if baptized with the Holy Ghost, and the promise treasured in our hearts "that God's Word is not to return unto Him void"? This is "the Stone cut out of the mountains without hands that is to roll on until it fills the whole earth,"—the Star of Bethlehem whose cheering rays are to light up every path throughout the world,—the noble Ship that is to convey her rich stores to every port, —the crystal Stream that is to find its way to every

dwelling,—the blessed Cloud that is to shed its showers upon every land,—the victorious Banner that is to float in triumph upon every breeze,—the Joy that is to gladden the hearts of every nation,—the Song that is to be sung in every language,—the Story of Love that is to be told in every tongue under heaven. Oh!—

> "Waft, waft, ye winds, His story,
> And you, ye waters, roll;
> Till, like a sea of glory,
> It spreads from pole to pole."

We may go forth "weeping, bearing precious seed;" but we "shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing" our "sheaves with us."

The Conflict and the Triumph.

A SERMON.

By Rev. J. K. Nichols, D. D.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE, METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH, IN THE WASHINGTON STREET CHURCH, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, MARCH 14, 1860.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it."—Rev. 2: 17.

Mighty is the struggle, deadly the conflict — a war of extermination — waging between light and darkness, between truth and error, between heaven and hell. The arena of conflict is this fallen world of ours; here the great battle is to be fought; here the momentous question at issue must be settled. For nearly six thousand years, deepening with the lapse of ages, has the contest been going on. In the cause of truth and righteousness, the people of the Most High — "the sacramental host of God's elect" — have stood forth in all ages, resisting even unto blood, striving against sin. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Human instrumentality alone is seen in the conflict, but the battle is the Lord's. He is the Captain of our salvation, and He leadeth his people on to certain and glorious victory.

In the discussion of the subject let us notice —

I. *The Conflict* — the irrepressible conflict — indicated by the expression in the text:—"Him that overcometh."

The great question involved in this conflict is, Whether or not God shall reign, whose right it is to rule. He has proclaimed Himself sovereign of all worlds, and demands homage and submission from the countless millions of His vast empire. But "that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan,"— the arch-enemy of all order and of just subordination — essaying to dispute dominion with the Lord of Hosts, has seduced man from his ancient and natural allegiance, and has incited him to rebellion against God; so that the whole earth is in a state of revolt — mankind, with common consent, rising up "against the Lord, and against His Anointed." And what is the result of this state of insurrection and anarchy? Behold the turmoil, the bloodshed, the wreck and ruin everywhere rife! In breaking allegiance with God, man has become a prey to violence and death. The great principle of policy on the part of the Divine government, under these circumstances, was to restore order and happiness by winning man back to loyalty and good faith with his sovereign, and thus to save him from the ruinous consequences of his fall. It would have been an easy matter for the Omnipotent One to settle the simple question of sovereignty against his impotent adversary by force of almighty power. But this would have involved the entire race of man, with him, in a state of common and irreparable ruin; and this would have proved a victory on the part of Deity about equivalent to a defeat. For in such case the enemy would have gained all he ever pur-

posed or hoped for in his crusade against God and our race. Ruin was his design, and ruin would thus have been the result. Jehovah, therefore, wisely determined to suspend judgment for the exercise of mercy, and thus to rescue man from the power of the evil one, leaving the ruin he had wrought to fall upon himself, and upon such only, with him, as refuse to be saved. Thus it was that the grand expedition of Divine mercy was set forward in Christ Jesus for the spiritual conquest of the world. "For this purpose," says St. John, (1 John, iii: 8) "the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And St. Peter says:—"For Christ hath also once suffered for sins; the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (St. Peter, iii: 18). These Scriptures indicate a two-fold object to be accomplished by the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, viz.: to break the power of the wicked one over our race, and to restore all them who trust in Christ to favor and fellowship with God. Such then is the nature, and such the issues of this mighty spiritual conflict. Earth indeed is the appointed arena, and Time the brief period allotted for its accomplishment; but the destinies of the moral universe — now, and at the judgment-day, and to eternity— are dependent on its great results.

The struggle began, but rather in a defensive form, in the very morning of Time, while the reluctant footsteps of the first offending pair were yet lingering upon the threshold of their Eden home. The purpose of God was taken, and ere they had departed the solemn announcement was made: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." The first indications of open conflict are seen beside the sacrificial altars of the first worship-

ping brothers of the race, symbolised in the respective and opposing offerings of faith and of infidelity, and practically exemplified in its spirit by the uplifting of the fratricidal hand on the one side and by the meek, unresisting submission to murderous outrage on the other. The struggle thus so strongly marked in its character and so fearful and bloody in its very inception, was thenceforward continued under various forms, down through the Antediluvian, Patriarchal, Levitical, and Prophetic ages of the Church, with increasing light and hope, unto the coming of Him "who hath the sharp sword with two edges"—when, led on by the Great Deliverer himself, the warfare became offensive and direct, and was carried forward upon the mighty principle of spiritual aggression to the subjugation of the world to the sovereignty of God: "The Law and the Prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

When the Prince of Darkness beheld the mighty Conqueror marching to the spoil, he was struck aghast, and cried out in sudden panic:—"What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Every act of our glorious Redeemer was a terror-stroke to the powers of darkness and of perdition. But it was amid the tragic scenes of Calvary and of the Cross, in the great act of the Atonement, that the tide of battle was turned with such fearful power against Satan and his hosts. Stunned by the terrible stroke, and wounded with a wound which eighteen centuries have failed to heal, he reeled and tottered to his fall. Rallying his forces, however, he returned to the conflict. He gave the primitive

Church a mighty shaking. Calling to his aid all the corruptions of a debasing heathenism, and all the crushing power of Jewish and Pagan intolerance, for ten successive and devastating persecutions did he scatter and peel the infant Church of God. So fearful was the onset, in the very beginning, that the great Apostle to the Gentiles, pressed in the conflict, was forced to exclaim:—"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"—(Eph. vi: 12). The Church at Pergamos, to whom the text was addressed, were called to contend with the enemy in the very seat of his power; and Antipas, God's "faithful witness," fell in the struggle, exchanging the cross of trial for the crown of everlasting triumph. Thus with unabated force and with various successes, during long and eventful centuries, the contest has been continued down to the present hour. And after almost two thousand years of incessant conflict, what are now the fortunes of war? Where now the Banner of the Cross? Do we find it forsaken or trailing in the dust? No, no! See! it is still high in heaven, floating in solemn grandeur over the mountain of the Lord's house, established in the top of the mountains, bearing still, as anciently to the eye of the Imperial chieftain,* the inspiring heraldic inscription — EN TOYTΩ NIKA—"By this conquer!"—and "behold all nations are flowing unto it"—(Isa. ii: 2). At this very moment Judea, China, and Japan, with their teeming populations, are opening to the Gospel; Ethiopia, in a sense never before witnessed, is almost literally "stretching out her hands unto God"; and even the

* Constantine the Great.

"isles of unsounded oceans are waiting for his law."—(Ps. lxviii: 31. Isa. xlii: 4).

It is true, the conflict is not yet over, the victory is not yet complete. The Church is yet militant—still struggling for the mastery; but who can hesitate as to the final issue? Who can doubt for a moment but that victory shall ultimately perch upon the Banner of the Cross? Never in all her past history did the Church occupy such position, such vantage ground, as she now does, nor such appliances and instrumentalities for direct and effective effort; and never were the signs of the times so big with hope as at the present. The two great antagonistic powers — *Apostasy* and *Imposture* — against which Christianity has had to contend for more than a thousand years, and but for which she would have taken the world long since, give evident signs of decay. Both totter to their fall, and are destined to perish and pass away. Mohammedanism is in its dotage; a wasting consumption is preying upon it, and for the want of vitality it is just ready to die. It may be said truly and emphatically, "The Crescent wanes before the Cross." By a late firman of the Sultan of Turkey, religious toleration has been proclaimed in the very seat of the False Prophet, and the Word of God has unrestrained circulation amongst its misguided millions. Says the Rev. Dr. Perkins, missionary to the Nestorians, in a recent letter:—"From two solitary American inquirers, whom I saw twenty-six years ago timidly approaching the senior missionaries at Constantinople, then recently established at that Mohammedan capital, I have seen all Turkey lighted up by Gospel watch-towers, dotted over with Protestant churches, and deeply moved by the pervading power of Divine

truth." And what shall I say of mystic Babylon — that fearful caricature of the city of our God? The Apocalyptic announcement, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen!" has almost become a historical verity. "His Holiness" the Pope of Rome holds his position in the Vatican by the force of French bayonets; or, as it has been forcibly expressed by another, "The Pope of Rome hangs by a single thread, which one man at Paris is just ready to cut." Wonderful civil and religious progress has been made in Catholic Italy, under the enlightened reign of Victor Emanuel, King of Sardinia. And who can doubt but that the late conflict with Austria, the Pope's ally, and the final settlement of the affairs of Italy, must result in still further concessions from "the man of sin" in favor of liberty and a pure Christianity? In France Protestantism is advancing with rapid strides, while in Ireland converts from Rome are being numbered by tens of thousands. But the most marvellous changes in this respect are to be seen in Catholic Spain. Only a few years ago, a Protestant there, because he was a Protestant, was denied the rite of sepulture, and his friends were compelled to spirit him away by night and bury him like a dog by the roadside. Now there are Protestant burying-grounds established by law throughout the kingdom. The conventual system, that stronghold of Papal corruption, has been abolished; some fifteen hundred of these establishments having been rased to their foundations and their effects confiscated, while the remaining five hundred have been converted into hospitals and institutions of learning. The law of tithes has been repealed; and the clerical domain, amounting to nearly one-fourth part of the whole landed property of the kingdom, has been confis-

cated to the State, and sold out to the people in small tracts, at reasonable rates and on long credits; the clergy themselves being put upon small salaries, payable by the State, with no power on their part to compel the people to go to confession. Thus the power of the clergy is broken in Spain, and Romanism is no longer the religion of the State. In fact, religious liberty already virtually exists among the people, and only failed of conventional enactment by three votes in the establishment of the new constitution. Indeed, what is the Roman Catholic Church at this day, compared with herself during the palmy days of long ago, when she sat a queen upon the "Seven Hills," arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, "the kings of the earth at her feet, her cringing and willing slaves, and she herself drunken with the blood of the saints and with the martyrs of Jesus"? How changed in her circumstances and in her whole situation! and how she stands now like one almost forsaken both of God and man! Alas for her! for the days of her tribulation are come, and the time of her terrible reckoning is at hand!*

*Such was the state of things in Catholic Europe ten years ago, when this sermon was delivered before the Conference. During the decade, however, great and significant changes have taken place among the Catholic Powers of the continent. Now, in 1870, Catholic Austria, having been humiliated by Protestant Prussia, has no power to fulfil the terms of the pretentious "Concordat" of years ago. Revolutionary Spain, having overthrown the Catholic dynasty, has established the government upon a liberal basis, and placed the Prince of Aosta, son of Sardinia's enlightened and progressive king, upon the throne. "French bayonets" lie crushed beneath the iron tread of German soldiery; and Napoleon III., the imperial protector of "His Holiness" the Pope, is military prisoner to Frederick William, King of Prussia. That "one thread the Pope of Rome was hanging upon has been cut," not by that "one man at Paris;" but in his forcible detention from that beleaguered city it has been severed by the good sword of Victor Emanuel of Sardinia; the "Patrimony of St. Peter," the States of the Church, have been secularised, the Pope himself is a prisoner at large in the Vatican, and Papal Rome is now the capital of united Italy. Startling changes these; and the near future is pregnant with still greater events. We wait that we may see the salvation of God!

And dost thou live, thou Beast of blood?
The wrath of an insulted God
Is out on thee, and thou hast known
The smart of His avenging rod,
And quailed beneath His blasting frown!

And oh! how changed, how fallen thou!
The diadem is off thy brow;
The nations curl the lip in scorn,
And ask where is her greatness now,
All crushed, and bleeding, and forlorn!

But ah! a still more awful doom
Shall come upon thee, wretched Rome!
Jehovah, in His vengeful wrath,
Shall sweep thee with the dread simoom,
And leave destruction in His path!

It is true that the Beast and the False Prophet are making desperate efforts to maintain their monstrous footing in the countries where they respectively exist. But these are not to be regarded as evidences of an inherent and sustaining vitality, but rather as the convulsive writhings of the serpent in his death agony, his hydra-head already crushed beneath the heel of the mighty conqueror.

With such and kindred facts before us, what may we not expect within the next quarter or half century, in the way of the downfall of error and the triumph of Gospel truth? And what shall we say of the glorious revival of experimental religion which for nearly three years has been sweeping like a mighty conflagration over this broad land of ours, and which, having crossed the Atlantic, is now spreading with unabated power over England and Scotland and Ireland, lighting up its watch-fires on the coast of France, and kindling its torch, as it were, even amid the dark recesses of old Salem's deserted towers! What is it but God's glorious Pentecost returning from her pilgrimage to the ends of the earth, with lightning speed and power, back to

the sacred spot whence she started out, almost two thousand years ago, her strength unspent and her "cloven tongues of fire" burning still! What is it but the great river of life, having girdled the globe and diffused its life-giving waters over the world, now rushing back in its mighty channel to replenish the exhausted fountain, and to give virtue and healing to the long forsaken and almost forgotten Bethesda! It would seem as if these eighteen centuries past have been taken up mainly in making preparation for the great and decisive battle upon the earth. But the grand crisis is now evidently approaching, and the day of universal redemption draweth nigh; while voices on earth and voices in heaven are just ready to unite in proclaiming the glad tidings that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever!

"Waft, waft, ye winds, His story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole;
Till, o'er our ransomed nature,
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign!"

In this mighty struggle every man is called to "stand up for Jesus." There is no neutral ground. "He that is not for me," says Jesus, "is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth." But ere we can be mustered into the service of the "Prince of Peace," there is an individual and personal triumph to be won, a victory over self and indwelling sin, bringing our own hearts and lives into conformity with the will of Christ. To do this, decision of character, holy heroism, prompt, earnest,

persevering effort is necessary. A tame, time-serving spirit will not answer. We must "strive" as one in mortal combat; "victory or death" must be our watchword; and thus by means of this personal conquest over ourselves, we become identified with God's victorious hosts in the mightier conquest of the world. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

"Gird on the heavenly armor
Of faith and hope and love;
And when the combat's ended,
You'll reign with Him above."

This brings me to notice —

II. *The Reward of Victory.* "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." What! the reward of victory? Yes, the reward of victory; for to him that overcometh in this contest there shall be not only victory, but reward — salvation on earth and glory in heaven. Let us look at the items as enumerated in the text.

"I will give to eat of the hidden manna." What

are we to understand by this expression? "Manna," you know, was that miraculous bread that came down from heaven to feed the famishing Israelites when they were just ready to perish of starvation in the wilderness. As a memorial of that event, a pot of this manna, by Divine direction, was put away and kept sacredly before the Lord. In long centuries afterwards, when Jerusalem was sacked by the Chaldeans, according to Jewish tradition, Josiah, the then reigning king, took this pot of manna, among other sacred things, and *hid* it; and it was their expectation that it would be restored to them in the times of the Messiah, as a special symbol of the Divine favor. In allusion to this tradition, it is believed that the phrase "*hidden* manna" is made use of in the text. But what is implied in the promise, "To be given to eat of it"? From its evident historical allusion it might seem to be restricted in its import to Divine interposition in times of extreme and perilous necessity, finding its counterpart in that other blessed promise, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be"—that is, just as God interposed to supply bread from heaven to feed the famishing tribes in the wilderness in the hour of their extremity, so will He continue to give grace to his servants, to help them in the time of need. Its import, however, is not to be confined to its historical reference: it has an evangelical significance. It is not simply *manna* that is promised, but *hidden* manna — that which underlies the outward seeming — the hidden reality of which, manna itself is but the outward sign or symbol. Moreover, according to the Jewish tradition, this hidden manna was not to be received until the times of the Messiah; and, accordingly, in my text He claims it as His right

and prerogative to bestow it upon His servants. It is therefore something that Christ alone can give, and embraces all the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace. Accordingly he says to the Jews, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead: I am the Bread of Life — the living Bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die; if any man shall eat of this Bread, he shall live forever." Christ, then, Himself is the gift as well as the giver — the sum and substance of the promise — Christ in all His saving offices — "Christ in you the hope of glory." He is that "hidden manna"; and he who is given to eat of it shall not only be saved from death, but he shall live forever. Promise this, indeed, exceeding great and precious. But although it looks to another and higher life for its fullest development, it has its application in this, and finds its most striking exemplification in that mysterious life-force by which believers are enabled to walk before God and the world "in newness of life." Indeed it is that life itself — that "life which is *hid* with Christ in God, so that when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." Hidden manna truly is it, feeding and sustaining that hidden and mysterious life of the Christian, which is unseen, unknown, and unacknowledged by the world. No life is so vigorous, enduring and indefatigable as the Christian life. Christianity in its practical character is life in earnest — to do without reward and to suffer without murmuring. What is the secret of its power? what the solution of its mystery? It differs essentially from the life of the world; and not less in its principle, not less in its motive-power or spring of action than in the action

itself. Instance self-denial, private prayer, endurance under suffering, resignation to the Divine will.

It is an easy matter, on the ordinary principles of human nature, to account for all the moral phenomena furnished by such a life as that of Napoleon Bonaparte, and even by that of our own Washington, as men of arms and of military achievements. A lofty patriotism supplies the solution in the one case, and a world-wide, unhallowed ambition in the other. But how will you account for the abnegation and self-sacrifice seen in the lives of such men as the missionaries, Henry Martyn, of England, and Adoniram Judson, of America, men equally distinguished with the two former, but in a very different sphere of life? Ambition will not lie, as in the case of Bonaparte; for there was neither empire nor emolument to be gained; neither will patriotism, as in the case of Washington; for country and even life itself were sacrificed to the service of the Gospel among the perishing heathen. The only solution is that found written upon the heart of an inspired Apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us; for we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves; but unto Him who died for them, and rose again." And what but this, my brethren, can account for your own sacrifice of the personal ambitions of life to the cause of the Gospel? From your talents and education, I may say without flattering you, you are fitted to fill almost any of the higher and more lucrative stations in life; and you might therefore, if you would, at least share with others the honors and emoluments they confer. Position and wealth are thus before you, and, to all human appearance, within your reach; but I see

you foregoing them all for the humble place and the meagre pay of itinerant ministers. How is this? "The love of Christ constraineth us"; and herein lies the solution of what would otherwise be inexplicable. Moreover, we can readily understand the conduct of the "gentleman," a devotee to the brutal "code of honor," who from some real or fancied wrong goes forth —

> "To the cited field,
> For double murder armed."

But how understand the Christian, insulted, spit upon, and smitten with dastard hand, and yet resisting it not? Why does he not smite the smiter? Where is his self-respect, where his manhood, we indignantly inquire? There it lies at the foot of the Cross, among the ruins of the "old man," crucified with his affections and lusts; while he himself, transformed, has gone forth a "new man" in Christ Jesus, with full power not only to resist evil without resenting it, but to "overcome evil with good." See him again amid the desolating afflictions of life; though crushed to earth, he looks upward, and smiling through his tears, exclaims, "Not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Whence this spirit of resignation, this childlike submission, this cheerful, happy, hopeful trust in God? He has learned it at the feet of the Great Teacher — learned to be "meek and lowly in heart;" and therefore amid the perturbations and sorrows of life finds "rest to his soul." "He endures as seeing Him who is invisible"; and like his great Exemplar, he has meat to eat that the world knows not of. His "meat is to do," or to suffer, as

the case may be, the will of his "Father who is in heaven." This is the sun of his existence, the very element of his being; and instead of becoming exhausted by it, he gathers strength by its exercise. The more he labors the more mighty is he to perform — the more he suffers the more powerful to endure. "The Eternal God is his refuge, and beneath him are the everlasting arms." Thus the friends of Jesus are given to eat of the hidden manna, and their souls are nourished by the bread of heaven. Therefore "they go on from strength to strength, until every one of them appeareth before God."

"*And I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*" This "white stone" is supposed by some to allude to the custom anciently practised in courts of justice, of Judges signifying their decision by means of pebbles or small stones; if favorable, a white stone being cast into the bag; if the contrary, a black one. If this be correct, the 'white stone" in the text may be taken to indicate that favorable and approving judgment which Christ will render in the case of each and all his faithful followers in the last day; saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Others think — and this is the more probable opinion — that the allusion is to those tokens of friendship and consideration among the ancient Romans, called *Tesseræ*. These *Tesseræ* were of various kinds; but the most common were the *tesseræ hospitales*, and the *tesseræ conviviales*; or the hospitable *tessera* and the convivial *tessera*. The

hospitable *tessera* was a token of friendship and alliance, consisting of an oblong square piece of ivory or stone, which the parties took and divided between them into two equal parts; each then writing his own name on his portion and exchanging it with the other, a compact was formed, so sacred that nothing but death could dissolve it; and even then it descended to the respective families of the parties with unabated force of obligation. This gave the parties to the compact a mutual claim upon the hospitality of each other, and also upon that of their friends respectively. In like manner we may say has the Son of God entered into compact with his saints. In token of his confidence and love He has, as it were, divided the hospitable *tessera* with each of them, giving them the white stone with the new name written on it, the import of which "no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it;" writing His own "new name" upon their hearts, and theirs upon his hands, and thus elevating them to that glorious "Legion of Honor" which gives them sympathy and fellowship with the throne of God. And this badge of distinction, with the name of Jesus inscribed upon it, constitutes their sure passport to the confidence and hospitality of His friends whereever they are found. You, my brethren of the ministry, with myself, can well understand and feel the force of this point in the illustration. By no class of men under heaven is this interesting fact more fully realised or more highly appreciated than by itinerant ministers. The Itinerant goes forth from his home and his kindred, into the wide, wide world, having no certain dwelling-place, and no guaranty of support save that given by his Lord and Saviour And yet wherever he goes he finds friends and

homes, and Christian hospitality everywhere stretches forth her hands to welcome him to her banqueting-house, delighting to do him honor. But more than this; it gives him an especial claim upon the bearer of that "new name written"—Jesus, the Saviour, Himself. His presence fills the universe, and in every place and at all times He owns and blesses His servants. The Christian finds his Saviour everywhere, and always precious. He bears the spiritual *tessera* which gives the pledge Divine, and Jesus owns and honors the blessed compact of which it is the symbol and the seal. And with such assurance of Divine support and blessing —

> "Should fate command him to the farthest verge
> Of the green earth — to distant barbarous climes,
> Rivers unknown to song, where first the sun
> Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
> Flames on the Atlantic isles —'tis nought to him:
> Since God is ever present, ever felt,
> In the void waste as in the city full!
> And where He vital breathes, there must be joy."

But the convivial or festive *tessera* will still further illustrate the subject in hand. This was a kind of illuminated card of invitation or welcome to an entertainment in celebration of some grand event, as of some great military achievement, the coronation of a prince, or of some other great national event. These cards were distributed to invited guests, and they constituted their right of privilege to all the honors and immunities of the festive occasion. In the application of this thought the point of illustration is most readily and forcibly seen. The mighty spiritual conflict of which we have been speaking must sooner or later terminate in glorious and eternal victory; and the conquest of

earth is to be celebrated in heaven. Indeed, heaven itself, in its blessed duration, will be but a grand gala-day of rejoicing, in celebration of earth's redemption and the glory of the great and triumphant Redeemer. Glorious festivity at the throne of God! Angel and archangel, cherub and seraph, the good and the glorified from all worlds, but especially the redeemed, will be there! Already has the mighty Conqueror issued, as it were, the festive *tessera*, his cards of invitation and welcome to his victorious hosts. "And the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." "And I beheld, and lo! a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.' And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living ones, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, 'Amen: blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen.'" Impressive, glorious, heavenly pageant! See!—

"Four and twenty elders rise
From their princely station;
Shout His glorious victories,
Sing His great salvation;
Cast their crowns before His throne,
Cry in reverential tone,
Glory be to God alone,
Holy, holy, holy One!"

"Who are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!" Glorious vision of triumph! "But eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

Such is a feeble outlining of the conflict, and such a faint foreshadowing of the reward of victory. But the great reality, the glorious consummation, will soon be here — the earth subdued, Jehovah honored, His saints forever blest!

My brethren, in view of this great spiritual conflict and its glorious issues, where do we stand? Where as a Church? Where as professed ministers of the Lord and Saviour? What is our position, and where do we muster this day? As a Church do we, as we fondly persuade ourselves, follow the leadership of the great "Captain of our salvation" to glory and victory? Or, as some arrogantly and unwarrantably assume, do we follow a mere phantom, a sort of *ignis fatuus*, and therefore wander bewildered amid the "uncovenanted mercies of God"? As professed ministers of the Gospel, are we truly such — marshalled by the Master Himself, and enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ? or

have we — as some would fain make it appear — gone a warfare at our own charges, "answering before we were called, and running before we were ready; and thus, instead of fighting the battles of the Lord, fighting as one that beateth the air"? Nay, nay; but with solemn consciousness of the right, we indignantly hurl back the Popish assumption, and claim in the light of truth and fact to stand as a Church, rank and file, shoulder to shoulder with those who constitute "the sacramental host of God's elect" — with the millions who rally accepted to the standard of our glorious Immanuel — "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." As ministers, it is true, we boast no superior authority, no special grace, that might be supposed to descend through "the filthy fingers of the mitred Bacchanalian." Nevertheless we claim as valid an ordination to the sacred office as that of any Church in Christendom, and are as ready to defend it in the light of the Scriptures and of the early history of the Church itself; and I may add, just as ready to respond to the grand muster roll-call of eternity with as conscious assurance of approval and plaudit from the Master of us all. But more than this: in proof of our ministry we point to the multitudes brought to God through our instrumentality — living epistles known and read of all men — "seals" by which the Great Head of the Church has been pleased to ratify our credentials, both on earth and in heaven. I had rather have a single soul converted to God through my efforts in the Gospel as proof of my ministry, than all the "consecrated lawn" that ever flaunted on surpliced priest or bishop from the days of Constantine the Great down to the present hour.

My brethren of the ministry — "leaders" but not

"commanders" of the people — charged under God with the furtherance and consummation of His glorious work — were I called in evidence before God this day, what a tale could I unfold in illustration of your self-sacrificing devotion of yourselves and your all to Christ and His cause in the Gospel! I flatter you not when I say that for my admiration of you in your holy calling I have no words of utterance. And how much my own heart has been quickened by your manly spirit of piety, and my life influenced for good by your noble example of life-long consecration to God, it is impossible for me to tell. Nevertheless, deeply conscious of my obligations in this regard, with gratitude to God I acknowledge it before you all this day. I am not an old man, though not so young as I was when, twenty-four years ago, in my trembling boyhood I was received into this Maryland Annual Conference; still I am one of the oldest members of this body. I have witnessed the reception of at least nine-tenths of the present membership. Will you indulge me in a reminiscence? I look over this Conference of Christian ministers, in its fullest sittings, and my heart grows sad at the sight. I see but six out of the thirty or forty who constituted its membership at the time I was honored with enrolment among them; and only two of that number are now in the effective work! What has become of so large a majority of our early membership, once strong to labor but now no longer with us in the work? I will briefly answer. Some have forsaken us altogether and gone into other communions. This of course was their right and their privilege, if they saw proper to do so, and I have no unkind reflections to make in the premises. But I must be indulged with the remark that you, my

brethren, also, might have had opportunity to go elsewhere had you desired it; but, as I conscientiously believe, you have known your calling better. Some have gone to other and distant fields of toil, where they still live to labor in connection with our Zion; while others, for reasons satisfactory to themselves, have retired into local spheres, where they still have it in their power to do much for the Church. Others, again, from loss of health, or the gathering infirmities of age, have been compelled to quit the active work. Their hearts are as deeply interested in the Church now as ever they were; and fain would they be side by side with the most vigorous of their brethren in the very heat of the conflict. But they cannot do what they would! God bless them; in their very feebleness they are helping on the glorious work. They render what active service they can, and still come up, some of them, to our annual assemblings, to aid us by their counsels and cheer us on in our arduous toils. But, at the same time, my brethren — and this should keep us humble — they silently admonish us by their disabilities of the coming days of adversity, when we, like themselves, may be laid aside, no more to participate in the active battle-strife for universal victory. Infirm as they are, how could we do without them? Long may they live to bless us with their presence and their prayers! But others, alas! have gone from us forever. They have fallen in the conflict; fallen with the harness on, doing battle for the Lord. Oh! how we missed them — Raleigh and Kesley, the Reeses, and others — when they came to us no more! And how have we not ceased to lament them to this hour! Green and fragrant are their memories in our hearts to-day; we shall never forget them. But, thank God! as one

and another of them have gone up, their mantles have fallen back upon the Elishas and Timothies of the body; so that though they themselves are gone, their places are not vacant. Once indeed I trembled for the fate of this fair young Church, the Church of my choice and the honored instrument of my salvation. A sort of "Seven Years' War" had left us, in this district, prostrate and bleeding at every pore. The fathers of our Israel, most of them, were not, and the remnant too feeble to help. I looked around upon the Conference, and as the bright eyes and ruddy countenances of its members met my gaze, my heart misgave me, and I shook my head in doubt, and sadly inquired with the herdsman prophet: "By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?" Forgive me, my brethren, for this doubt of you. It was because I had no confidence in myself; but as I have seen one and another of you in your early manhood putting on the wisdom and moderation of age, and nobly coming forward to assume the weighty responsibilities of sustaining the interests of our beloved Zion, I have ceased to fear. Doubt and apprehension have given place to confidence and hope in regard to the future of the Methodist Protestant Church. We live this day, and with a more vigorous life and more brilliant prospects than ever before; and we shall yet make ourselves more than respected, among the great sisterhood of Churches in this land, in pushing forward the triumphs of the glorious Gospel of Christ.

My brethren, what a calling, what a work is ours! and what glorious hopes and what bright anticipations cluster around the future and final consummation! What times too are these in which we live! The rush of ages is on us. The man, that is

a man in his place, now accomplishes more in the short space of a single generation than Methuselah did during the whole of his millennial life-time! Steam and lightning are the symbols as well as the verities of the age; and the man that would make his mark upon it must be a man, a man in its noblest sense, with the decision, integrity, virtue, intelligence, and industry of a man. He must be a man of "one book" and of "one work;" and may I not add, of one Church also. The ecclesiastical weathercock, turning with every breeze of popular applause, or promise of preferment, or prospect of pecuniary reward, is not the man for the times, nor will history be likely to write him down among the benefactors of this age. It is certainly not a time now for the changing of ecclesiastical relations simply for the sake of change, or from any sectarian or sinister motive — now, when the light of millennial dawn is already upon the mountains of Zion, and the evangelical Churches of Christendom, rising above their sectarian channels, are rushing like a thousand kindred streams to blend their waters into one vast ocean of blessed Christian brotherhood, while narrow-hearted bigotry and anti-Christian exclusiveness are being cast forth as a vile sediment or filthy deposit from the purified waters of the Church! Our duty, our high and holy calling, is to *do* and to *endure* for Christ's sake; "to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." And it will matter but little in what part of the vast army we may be marshalled, whether in flank or centre, in front or rear, so that we do our duty. Let us therefore endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and the victory and the glory and the crown of life will be ours forever.

We are living, we are dwelling,
In a grand and awful time;
In an age on ages telling,—
To be living is sublime!

Hark! creation all awaking,
Gog and Magog to the fray;
Lost! What soundeth? Nature quaking,
Groaning for the Judgment-day!

Will ye sport, then; will ye dally,
With your music and your wine?
Up! it is Jehovah's rally;
God's own arm hath need of thine!

It is Jehovah! Will ye fold your
Faith-clad arms in lazy lock?
Arouse thee, O thou drowsy soldier!
Worlds are charging to the shock.

Worlds are charging, Heaven beholding:
Thou hast but an hour to fight!
See the blazoned Cross unfolding,
On, right onward for the right!

On! let all the soul within you
For the truth's sake go abroad;
Strike! let every nerve and sinew
Tell on ages, tell for God!

And now unto Him, who in His times shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see, to Him be honor and power everlasting. Amen.

The Personality, Deity and Work of the Holy Ghost:

A SERMON, PREACHED BEFORE THE MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE, M. P. CHURCH, AT NEWARK, N. J., MARCH, 1861.

By Rev. D. W. Bates.

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"—Acts xix: 2.

This question is supposed to have been addressed to the Asiatic Jews; and their answer was not designed to imply that they had never heard of the Holy Ghost; but that they did not know that the particular gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost were then to be received—"not denying the existence, but the plentiful effusion of it." (*Pearson on the Creed.*) The term ghost usually means a spirit. It is said "Jacob yielded up the ghost." (Gen. xlix: 33.) "Ananias fell down and gave up the ghost." (Acts v: 5.) But when the qualifying word holy precedes that of ghost, we cannot then apply it to any ordinary spirit, but to *the Spirit*, the third person in the adorable Trinity, and to Him alone. The union of three in one, the mystery of three persons in one God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—we cannot venture to explain. "The doctrine of the Trinity is rejected by some because it is incomprehensible. That it is indeed a mystery we do not deny; but no man hath yet shown that it involves a real contradiction. Some have assumed that it should be ranked with transubstantiation, as equally absurd.

But transubstantiation includes palpable contradictions: and then we have the evidence of our eyes, feelings and taste, that what we receive in the Lord's Supper is bread, and not the body of a man. But who ever attempted to prove the doctrine of the Trinity to be thus self-contradictory?" (*Pearson.*) If it is to be rejected because it is a mystery, or we cannot understand it, we may for the same reason reject our own existence (for it is a mystery); and we may deny the being of God altogether, because we cannot understand how a self-existent, independent first cause came into being or has eternally existed.

The doctrine of the Trinity may be above our reason, but contrary to it it cannot be. "Reason is the faculty of deducing unknown truths from principles and propositions already known." (*Locke on the Understanding.*) Who can present known principles and propositions contrary to the trinity of the Deity? We cannot examine God philosophically, for it is a principle of philosophy that every effect must have an adequate and efficient cause. God is self-existent, and therefore above all philosophy; and if so in His origin, may He not be, yea must He not be in His nature? "It is a mystery that men have two eyes that move at one and the same time in the same direction, defying the power of their possessors to separate their action, and yet these two eyes have no immediate connection with each other; are we to reject this fact in nature because it is a mystery? If we do, it will not destroy the truthfulness of it, but will betray our stupidity." (*Owen on Holy Spirit.*)

That the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in the Scriptures is clear to our mind. Not only is it clearly revealed in the New Testament, but so

strongly alluded to in the Old that it cannot well be questioned. The learned inform us that the Hebrew names of God, acknowledged by all to be expressive and declaratory of some peculiarity or excellence of His nature, are found in several instances in the plural as well as singular form; and one of them, *Aleim*, generally so. This is the very first name in the Scriptures under which the Divine Being is introduced to us as creator of heaven and earth. "In the beginning, God (*Aleim*) created the heaven and the earth." Again, "Know ye that Jehovah He is Aleim: He hath made us and not we ourselves." (Ps. c: 3.) Jehovah, if it has not a plural form, has more than one personal application. "The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." We have here the visible Jehovah, who talked with Abraham, raining the storm of vengeance, "out of heaven," from another, an invisible Jehovah. Thus, we have two Jehovahs expressly mentioned, yet we have it most solemnly asserted, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." (Deut. vi: 4. *Watson's Institutes.*) Other plural forms of speech also occur. "And God said, let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness;" "And the Lord God said, behold the man is become as one of *us;*" "And the Lord said, let *us* go down." The solemn form of benediction in which the Jewish high priests were commanded to bless the children of Israel, has in it this peculiar indication, and singularly answers to that so common at the close of the Apostolic epistles: "The Lord (Jehovah) bless thee and keep thee; the Lord (Jehovah) make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord (Jehovah) lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

(Num. vi: 24–5–6.) If the three members of this benediction be attentively considered, they will be found to agree to the three persons taken in the usual order of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Father is the author of *blessing* and *preservation; illumination* and *grace* are from the Son; and *illumination* and *peace* are from the Spirit, the teacher of truth and the comforter. The first member of the formula expresses the benevolent "love of God," the Father of mercies and the fountain of all good; the second well comports with the redeeming and reconciling grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the last is appropriate to the purity, consolation, and joy which we receive from the communion of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah, in his vision of the seraphim, describes one as crying "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. vi: 3), thereby indicating the Trinity by this third reference to the holiness of God. Again he says:—"Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read; for *my* mouth it hath commanded, and *his spirit* it hath gathered them." (xxxiv: 16.) Here is one person speaking of *the spirit*, another person. "I am with you, saith the *Lord of Hosts:* according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so *my Spirit* remaineth among you; fear ye not. For thus saith the *Lord of Hosts*, I will shake all nations, and the *desire* of all nations shall come." (Hag. ii: 5, 7.) Here also we have three persons distinctly mentioned: the *Lord of Hosts*, His *Spirit*, and the *Desire* of all nations. "Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning: from the time that it was, there am I; and now the *Lord God* and His *Spirit* hath sent me." (Isa. xlviii: 16.) Here again three persons are alluded to: the *Lord*, *God*,

and His *Spirit.* The New Testament is explicit. The form of baptism, "in the name of the *Father*, and of the *Son*, and of the *Holy Ghost*"; and the Apostolic benediction, "the grace of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, the love of *God*, and the communion of the *Holy Ghost*," to say nothing of the disputed passage, "There are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one" (1 Jno. v: 7), explicitly teach the trinity of persons in the Godhead.

But as our intention is not to discourse upon the Trinity, but the personality, deity, and work of the Holy Ghost, we shall proceed to the discussion of this part of our subject.

I. *The Personality of the Holy Ghost.*

Those who reject the doctrine of the Trinity reject also the personality and deity of the Holy Ghost, and contend that where the Scriptures represent the Holy Ghost as a person it is a *prosopopœia:* as "Charity suffereth long and is kind, charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. xiii: 4, 7), all of which personal actions are attributed to charity, which is no person, but belonging to the person who is charitable, because he performs those actions according to and by virtue of that charity which is in him. In the same manner, say they, personal actions are attributed to the Holy Ghost, which is no person, but only the virtue, power and efficacy of God. They tell us also that the Spirit is given, that the Spirit is poured out,

and that men do drink of it and are filled with it. Thence they gather that the Holy Ghost is not a person because these expressions are inconsistent with personality. It is true that God is said to have given the Holy Ghost to them that obey Him (Acts v: 32), and it is equally true that the prophet says, "Unto us a son is given" (Isa. ix: 6), and the Son is admitted to be a person. That blessed Spirit is not only an energy or operation, a quality or power, but a spiritual and intellectual subsistence. If we conceive it an operation only, then it must only be actuated and not act; and when it is not actuated, it must not be at all. If we say that it is a quality and not a substance, we say that it is that which we cannot prove to have any being. (*Pearson.*)

The New Testament describes the Holy Ghost by such personal dispositions and with such operations as are evident marks of a person. We are exhorted by the Apostle "not to grieve the spirit of God" (Eph. iv: 30); but grief is certainly a personal affection, of which quality is not capable. We are assured that "the Spirit maketh intercessions for us with groanings that cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii: 26.) We can understand what are interceding persons, but have no apprehension of interceding or groaning qualities. The operations of the Spirit are manifest, and as manifestly personal; for He "searcheth all things; yea, even the deep things of God" (1 Cor. ii: 10.) "The Spirit said unto Peter, behold three men seek thee: arise therefore and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for *I* have sent them" (Acts x: 19, 20.) (*Pearson.*) "The Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I* have called them" (Acts xiii: 2.) These passages cannot be a descrip-

tion of an energy or the power of God, but of the acts of a Divine person. "So he is said to come, to go, to be sent, to teach, to guide, to comfort, to make intercession, to bear witness, to give gifts, 'dividing them to every man as he will,' to be vexed and grieved, all of which relate to persons and are not properties." (*Pearson.*) "If a wise and honest man should come and tell you that in a certain country where he had been, there is an excellent Governor who wisely discharges the duties of his office; who hears causes, discerns right, distributes justice, relieves the poor, and comforts the distressed; would you not think that he intended by this description a righteous, wise, diligent and intelligent person? What else could any man living imagine? But suppose another should come and say that the former information was true, but that no person was intended by the description, but the sun or the wind, which, by their benign influences, rendered the country fruitful and temperate, and disposed the inhabitants to mutual kindness; and therefore the whole was merely figurative. Would you not think him trifling with you?" (*Owen on the Holy Spirit.*) So we think the Scriptures when they speak of the Holy Ghost design to represent to us the third person in the adorable Trinity, and the man who says they only intend to describe an essence or a quality mocks our understanding.

II. *The Deity of the Holy Ghost.*

If the Holy Ghost be a person, and not a quality or essence, then He must be God, for the powers and prerogatives ascribed to Him can be ascribed to none other than a Divine person. Hence the Saviour said to the Jews, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall

be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come." (Matt. xii: 31.) A being against whom blasphemy cannot be forgiven must be God, for the Saviour commands *us* to forgive one another *our sins* even unto seventy-times seven. "Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." (Acts v: 3, 4.) Hence Peter expressly calls the Holy Ghost, God. Paul says, "What! know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. vi: 19.) "And know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. iii: 16.) What is a temple but a house of God?

"And, lastly, to the Holy Ghost is attributed, 1. *Eternity.* Paul says:—'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the *eternal Spirit* offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.' (Heb. ix: 14.) 2. *Immensity.* 'Whither shall I flee from thy spirit?' said David. (Ps. cxxxix: 7.) 3. *Omnipotence.* 'The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened,' says Micah (ii: 7.) 4. *Prescience.* 'This Scripture must be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake concerning Judas.' (Acts i: 16.) 5. *Omniscience.* 'The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God.' (1 Cor. ii: 10, 11.)" (*Owen.*) That Being to whom is attributed eternity, immensity, omnipotence, pre-

science, and omniscience, must be God. These powers are attributed to the Holy Ghost, and therefore the Holy Ghost must be God.

III. *The Work of the Holy Ghost.*

The first account we have of the operations of the Holy Ghost is in the work of creation. When "God created the heaven and the earth, the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. i: 2, 3.) When God created man "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul;" hence Job says, "The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." (Job xxxiii: 4.)

2. Not only in creation does the Holy Ghost perform a conspicuous part, but in Divine revelation he is the actor. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets." (Heb. i: 1.) God sometimes spoke in an audible voice, as in the case of Moses, "face to face" (Exod. xxxiii: 11); of Elijah (1 Kings xix: 13); and of Samuel (1 Sam. iii: 4.) Sometimes He communicated with man by dreams and visions. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, had visions. Sometimes He appeared as men, as in the case of Abraham (Gen. xviii: 2), and Joshua at the siege of Jericho. Sometimes in trances, as in the case of Peter and his sheet (Acts x: 11), John and Daniel in their apocalyptic visions. St. Peter informs us that these dreams and visions, or revelations of God, of whatever character they may be, are by the Holy Ghost. For "it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God), I will pour out my

Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." (Acts ii: 17.) "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. i: 21.) St. Paul says all these revelations or "scriptures are given by inspiration of God." (2 Tim. ii: 16); and therefore these lively oracles, so rich in their history of the past and glorious in their revelations of the future, are all the inditings of the Holy Ghost.

3. The Christian ministry is selected and called by the Holy Ghost. "The Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul unto the work whereunto *I* have called them." (Acts xiii: 2.) Paul admonishes the disciples to "take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." (Acts xx: 28.) This Christian ministry is therefore a Holy Ghost ministry, or no ministry. He hath reserved unto Himself the right to select His own agents to carry on His own work. Men may select, colleges may educate, and Churches may ordain, but unless the Holy Spirit has selected and called them they are intruders in the sacred office. One of the most prominent features of the Wesleyan reformation was the reviving of the *proper* Christian ministry: the employing of men whom God had selected, and the *Holy Ghost moved* to and qualified for the work. The province of the Church is to follow the indications of this Spirit, and by her prudential regulation of ordination to separate only such as *He* has called. Whenever she goes beyond this she intrudes upon

Divine prerogatives, and the ordained is not a Heaven-recognised ministry though my Lord of Canterbury be the officiating bishop.

4. When such a Heaven-selected ministry goes forth in the power and spirit of its mission, the Holy Ghost accompanies it and makes its ministrations effectual in the conviction of sinners. The Saviour said:—"If I depart I will send Him unto you, and when He is come He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Howbeit, when He, the spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." (Jno. xvi: 7, 8, 13.) Take away the Spirit from the Gospel and you render it a dead letter. Man by nature is blind, and cannot see; proud, and will not own; stupid and insensible to his condition. It is the Spirit of truth that must awaken the sinner, and nothing can be substituted for it in the success of our ministrations. It is this that makes the pulpit more powerful than the stage. Sermons may be perfect in composition, depth of thought and finished rhetoric, abounding with the brightest scintillations of intellect and evidencing a brilliant imagination, and presented so perfect and life-like that the audience weep like beholding some dreadful tragedy; but unless the Holy Ghost apply the truth the sinner's conscience will not be awakened, his judgment convinced, nor his will subdued. The effect, like that of a tragedy, will be evanescent. Without this blessed Spirit, the reasoning of a Paul, the eloquence of an Apollos, and the energy of a Peter, would fail; but when He descended as cloven tongues of fire and sat upon the Apostles, "and they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance," three thousand in one day were the fruits of their ministrations. In the early ages of the Church the Holy

Spirit attended the ministrations of the Apostles in a manner truly miraculous. Mr. Wesley and several of his ministers, and many others of that age, seem to have had His presence in their ministrations but little inferior. How far it may be the privilege of ministers in these days to have the miracle-working power of the Holy Ghost to attend their ministrations I know not, but I am convinced that if we had more of His presence we would be more abundantly successful.

5. *The conversion of penitents.* By the term conversion I do not mean baptism, confirmation, nor an outward reformation of life, but that spiritual renovation of our nature which God works in the soul when He brings it into life; when He raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is "created anew in Christ Jesus," when it is renewed after the image of God in "righteousness and true holiness;" when love of the world is changed into love of God, pride into humility, passion into meekness; hatred, envy, and malice into sincere, tender, disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, and devilish mind is turned into the "mind which was in Christ Jesus."

6. The Holy Ghost is the great agent in the sanctification of believers. Sanctify often means to set apart; hence the Levitical priesthood, the ark, the altar, the tabernacle, and the temple were all set apart or sanctified to holy purposes. Sanctification proper is really an entire cleansing of the heart from the defilement of sin by the Holy Ghost. Sanctification, in the common understanding, is the highest

state of Christian experience and perfection. Sometimes it is termed holiness of heart; and the command is, "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." (Lev. xix: 2.) Sometimes it is called perfection; as, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. v: 48.) This high state of Christian experience and perfection is by the Holy Ghost. St. Peter says: "God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts xv: 8, 9). When God designed the great work of recovering fallen man, He appointed in his wisdom two great means thereof: one the giving of His Son for men, the other the giving of His Spirit to men. Hence there were two general heads of the promises of God concerning salvation: the one, respecting the sending of His Son to take our nature and to suffer for us therein; the other, the giving of His spirit to make the effects and fruits of the incarnation, obedience, and suffering of His Son effectual to us. The former is the subject of the Old Testament, the latter of the New. The one is called the law, the ministration of the letter; the other is called the Gospel, the ministration of the Spirit. (*Owen.*) (2. Cor. iii: 6-8.) While the love of God is the moving cause, the blood of Christ is the procuring, the faith of man is the instrumental, and the Holy Ghost is the efficient cause. The effect of its operations upon the heart of man in its awakening, conversion, and purification, is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv: 17.) "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness and faith." (Gal. v: 22.) "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all good-

ness, and righteousness, and truth." (Eph. v: 9.)

7. The Holy Ghost is our comforter. The Saviour said if He went away He would send the comforter. It was this comforter that sustained the disciples and early Christians, and enabled them to "take joyfully the spoiling of their goods" (Heb. x: 34.); and Paul to say, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself" (Acts xx: 24.) It was this that enabled the martyrs to triumph in death. It is this comforter that raises up and cheers the suppliant sinner at the foot of the Cross. It is this that enables the Christian in the dark hour of temptation to say: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." (Ps. xlii: 11.) It is this that cheers and prompts the God-called missionary in his embassy of salvation to heathen lands, and enables him to say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. i: 21.) It is this that sustains us, as messengers of salvation, to go forth in the name of our Master and to hold up the Cross to perishing sinners. Without it how gloomy and cheerless would be our hearts! It is this that enables the Christian in the hour of death to say with Wesley, "The best of all, God is with us;" with McKendre, "All is well;" with Paul, "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1. Cor. xv: 55-57); and with David, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Ps. xxiii: 4.)

To recapitulate: The Holy Ghost is our creator, enlightener, sanctifier, and comforter. Let Mahom-

etans go forth with the sword as the symbol of victory, and Papal Rome with the wooden relic. Let baptised infidelity abjure the divinity of the Son and the Spirit. Let formal Christianity eliminate the power of religion; but let us remember that ours is a Holy Ghost religion, and that we have been selected and called by Him as ministers of this Holy Ghost religion. May the blessed Spirit ever comfort our hearts and sanction our ministrations. Amen.

A Sermon

ON THE ORIGIN, WORK AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY, PREACHED BEFORE THE MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE, METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH, HELD IN CHESTERTOWN, MARYLAND, MARCH, 1862.

By Rev. John Roberts.

"I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me."—Acts xxvi: 17. 18.

I take my place before you, on this occasion, my brethren, not from any consciousness of ability for the task before me, but from respect for the appointment of this Conference, through its president, and I trust with a full sense of the responsibility involved. I solicit your attention and bespeak your sympathy and prayers. May the Divine Spirit's presence make this a profitable season to us all.

Our text is found in the address of the Apostle Paul to King Agrippa. It is that part of this address which repeats our Lord's words to him, and sets forth the Divine origin and authority of his office as a Gospel minister, and the nature and end of the work for which it is instituted. "I send thee," &c.

A subject like this calls for the most careful examination. Passion, prejudice and presumption should be carefully excluded, the mind should be entirely under the guidance of the Divine word, and the heart influenced alone by the Holy Spirit.

Thus divinely endowed, may we hope to rise to a just comprehension of the Divine ideal of the ministry, and estimate properly its work and the results thereof.

I. *The Divine origin and authority of the Gospel ministry.* This is clearly presented and amply sustained by Scripture testimony. The expression in the text, "I send you," is the language of our Lord addressed to and quoted by the Apostle. It is in harmony with all the teachings of the New Testament on the subject. When He commissioned His disciples after His resurrection, He said, "*Go ye* into all the world; preach my Gospel to every creature." It is His prerogative alone to say "*Go.*" The disciple may hear it, and when he hears he may not disregard it, except at the peril of the "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel;" but he may not go without it. The Church may recognise and sanction it by election, and by the imposition of hands; but she may not give it, for it is not her prerogative, but her Lord's, to do this. Our Lord's language on another occasion illustrates the same principle. "*I send you forth* as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." (Matt. x: 16.) And in Luke x: 1, it is said, "After these things the Lord *appointed* other seventy also, and *sent them forth.*" We are also commanded to seek of Him ministerial supply. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would *send forth* laborers into His harvest."

The Apostle Paul uniformly recognises the dependence of the Church on God for an efficient ministry. He recognises this with grateful feelings, in its application to himself, in his first letter to Timothy, i: 12—"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord for

that He hath counted me faithful, *putting me* into the ministry;" and to the Ephesians he says, (Acts xx: 24) "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the *ministry* which *I have received of the Lord Jesus*, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." That his ministry was received from the Lord Jesus, that he was called and qualified for it by lips Divine, were to him sufficient motive to all labor, sufficient antidote to all suffering, sufficient safeguard against all danger. Faithful to the trust committed to him, let death come as it would, he felt he could finish his course with joy. To the Corinthians he writes: "Christ *sent me*, not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel;" and to the Galatians (i: 11, 12) he says, "The Gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the *revelation of Jesus Christ*."

Thus, you perceive, the Apostle attributes both his appointment to and his qualification for the work of the ministry to the direct agency of our Lord. And this will doubtless be regarded as true respecting all the Apostles. But is it not true also of all the ministers of the Gospel? Many examples might be furnished giving an affirmative answer to this question. Two must suffice. To Aristarchus he gives this charge: "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it;" and to the elders of the Church at Ephesus he says: "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."

These passages might be greatly multiplied. This however is not necessary. What we have presented will serve to show that both the ministerial office and the minister who fills it are ordained and sent by the Great Head of the Church.

Two practical, and therefore, important principles arise from this doctrine of the Divine origin and appointment of the ministry.

1. The first is, that the office originating solely in God, and the minister deriving his call and his authority directly from Him, he is responsible to Him and not to man for the manner in which he executes its functions. What I mean is, not that the Church is bound to receive all who claim to be the recipients of this grace, for she is required to "try the spirits whether they be of God;" nor yet that she has no disciplinary jurisdiction over them, for she is commanded to "withdraw herself from every brother that walketh disorderly," and the Christian is required to "withdraw himself from men of corrupt minds;" nor yet further, that we are bound to receive all that they shall teach, for we are admonished, "Take heed how ye hear." But I desire to be understood to say, that our Lord alone can furnish them with a message. Obviously it cannot come from the Church, for it is to her that they are sent. If they are the Church's servants for Jesus' sake, they must serve her for the honor of Jesus, and He alone can direct properly as to how and with what they shall serve the Church. No hearer, therefore, has the right to dictate to the minister of God what he shall preach. Men may hear or they may forbear, but that is at their peril; he must preach Christ in all His fulness, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. If his office originated in man, or if it was sustained and perpetuated by human power, then would he be bound to be governed by human dictation; but otherwise, he is not at liberty to "confer with flesh and blood." Christ alone is Lord of the conscience as well as of the

Church; and no threats which passion, prejudice or power may utter must be allowed to intimidate him, no promises of emolument or honor must bribe him, and no fear of human censure must be allowed to cause him to shrink from a clear and full exposition of his message, or a faithful application of Christ to the souls of men. While wisdom and prudence should always govern his public ministrations, he must not run into the extreme of pusillanimity and cowardice. Christ must be preached however his foes may rage; the Cross must be borne however great the reproach; sin must be rebuked however reputable or powerful the sinner; God must be honored however we may be abased; for the minister is an ambassador for Christ to sinners; and woe be to him if Christ be not honored through his unfaithfulness: woe be to him if sinners perish through his cowardice or neglect.

2. The other principle is, that as the sent of Christ, the divinely appointed and qualified minister of the Gospel, his business is to preach the Gospel. It is true that there are few subjects of speculative or of practical character which have not a direct or indirect, an immediate or remote bearing on our moral development and on the subject of redemption. But while this is so, it must be obvious that these in themselves are not all proper themes of pulpit ministrations. Hence while the pulpit may with propriety bring science, the arts, literature and government under contribution to illustrate the Gospel, to explain the relations and duties of man to his fellow-man, and his higher relations and duties to his God, as the great Creator, Lawgiver and Judge of all—science, the arts, literature, and politics, are not themes adapted to the elevated sphere of

the Christian pulpit. What an impropriety, to say the least, to feed a multitude perishing for want of the bread of life, upon disquisitions on astronomy, chemistry, physiology, the fine arts, or politics! What a cruelty, I had almost said crime, to waste the precious hour allotted to audience with Heaven, an hour especially valuable to perishing sinners, resting under the anger of God and exposed to the woes of an endless hell, in the discussion of questions of social policy and political economy! This is not preaching the Gospel. This is not holding up the beacon light to shine out over the dark and turbid ocean of life, and to guide the anxious and wakeful mariner to the peaceful haven. This is to be sensational, and perhaps to be popular, and, in the phrase of the times, to make the sacred calling pay; but it is at the same time to lead the Lord's flock from the pastures of grace and truth spread out for them, into swamps and thickets and deserts and wilds, where pitfalls and beasts of prey and pestiential vapors abound, and where death is likely to meet them at every step. Christ's remedy for the world's woes is to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; and to effect this He commands, "Preach the Gospel." If the heart is renewed, if the individual conscience is quickened and purified, if the man be reconciled to God, all other subjects and relations will adjust themselves. The one great work of the preacher therefore is to preach the Gospel.

II. *The object of the ministerial work* is set forth in the text. Two specific points are indicated, namely: to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

1. *To open their eyes;* that is, to enlighten the understanding and to awaken the conscience. The universal condition of our race — a condition recognised by the Word of God, and one which must be recognised by the Christian minister if he would be successful in his great work — is one of spiritual darkness and death. The fall of man has cast the sable curtain over every human soul. Sin has drawn a film over the organ of his spiritual vision. The man born blind is not more destitute of a correct idea of light and colors than he is of a proper conception of spiritual things. By nature he is —

> "To all that's good, averse and blind,
> But prone to all that's ill;
> What dreadful darkness veils the mind,
> How obstinate the will!"

The words in which the Divine Spirit describes his condition are "darkness," "blindness," and the like; and the Saviour refers to it when he says, "Except a man be born again he cannot *see* the kingdom of God." To see, that is to perceive and appreciate the things of God, requires the new birth. How deep therefore is the darkness! How dense is the region of the shadow of death in which the unawakened sinner dwells!

It is the business of the minister of Christ to bring the rays of Divine light to bear on this sombre gloom, to dissipate this darkness, and give light to those who "sit in the region of the shadow of death." It is his high vocation to arouse the sinner to a sense of sin, to awaken him to a consciousness of his guilt and his danger. This is his great business; and what a momentous work it is! It is fraught with consequences as endless as eternity. Well may he tremble at the bare thought of it! But his sufficiency is

from the Master who has sent him, and His word abounds in instructive models in this work. What an instructive pattern is presented in St. Paul! Behold him before Felix. Hear how he addresses him. Consider the relation which Paul the prisoner held to Felix the magistrate; Paul, the self-denying believer, to Felix, the licentious and avaricious sinner, insensible alike to the requirements of justice and of chastity, and regardless of eternity. Did the fear of bonds or of death, did the hope of release or of liberty, make him forgetful that he was sent to open the eyes of sinners and to turn them from darkness to light? Not for one moment. On the contrary, at the very moment when human prudence would have suggested flattering words and conciliating speeches, he selects the very topics which of all others would be least welcome to his auditor. He spoke of righteousness to a man whose unrighteous exactions were proverbial, and who at the very time hoped to receive bribes from Paul and his friends to secure his release. He spoke of temperance to a man who was living in adultery with the wife of another. He spoke of judgment to come to a man who lived for and thought only of time. Self was for the time forgotten, and the salvation of the soul before him alone occupied his thoughts. This stirred his soul and called forth those sentiments upon the utterance of which Felix trembled. His eyes, so long closed, were at last opened, and light began to illuminate his soul; but he turned away from its brightness again, and closed his eyes to the objects which it brought to his view, and, contrary to the dictates of common justice and humanity, "to do the Jews a pleasure, he left Paul bound." From the Apostle's own language we may infer that it was his invari-

able custom to deal thus honestly with souls. He calls his brethren at Miletus to witness that he had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God. At Athens, at Corinth, before Festus and Agrippa, we behold his courage and fidelity. Dangers were faced fearlessly, labors were undertaken cheerfully, sacrifices were made promptly, and hardships were endured patiently, in obedience to the voice of duty. The approval of his Master was a sufficient recompense for all his sufferings and his toils.

I shall not detain you with further examples. Of Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles and ministers, numbers might be presented. It should be our aim to emulate their courage and faithfulness. The command of our Lord is, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins."

2. The Gospel minister must be qualified not only to enlighten the understanding, but to influence the heart; not only to open their eyes, but to "turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." Conviction of sin is a necessary experience in the process of personal salvation; but it is only a step. The soul pausing there or resting there, will be lost. Even Felix attained to this; and perhaps no man favored with the Gospel faithfully preached ever failed to feel himself, at some period of his life, a lost sinner. It is a living faith that saves — a faith that acts on its convictions. "Devils believe and tremble"; so did Felix, and so do thousands of others who never get nearer heaven than either Felix or Satan. We must therefore acquire the ability to persuade. Unless the awakened soul

can be persuaded to turn, it will be of little avail that it has been awakened. It is in vain that I have convinced the pilot that the course he is steering will wreck his vessel on the dangerous coast which he is rapidly approaching, if I shall fail to constrain him to alter his course. The increasing light of morning will be lost on the man who is nearing the verge of the cataract in his frail skiff, if he permit her still to float on with the current without an effort to reach the shore. Though you may convince the merchant by the force of your reasoning, he will as certainly become a bankrupt as though you held your peace, should he continue his reckless speculations and fail to use the means within his reach to maintain his solvency. True, you have opened their eyes; but as well for them did their eyes remain closed, as that, being opened, they perversely pursued the way to ruin: The principle here illustrated is as true in its application to spiritual as it is to temporal things. Light is proffered, and the eyes of the understanding are unclosed; but of what avail is it if the sinner shuts them again and rushes on blindly as before? Divine deliverance is proffered; but of what avail is it if, conscious of its presence, he refuses its timely aid and continues under the power of Satan? While grace begins its Divine work by opening the eyes, that work will not be completed until the soul is constrained to turn from darkness to light. But while the eyes are open, while the light is streaming into the soul, the zealous minister will see his opportunity to ply those persuasives which are known to be so effective in turning men from the power of Satan unto God.

The peculiar office of the ministry, then, is hortatory as well as expository. While it aims at con

vincing the judgment, it also contemplates influencing the will and moving the affections. The Apostle Paul felt this to be one great object of his ministry. He brought forward the terrors of the Lord to move the passions of his hearers and as persuasives to godliness. Under a faithful presentation of them, Felix trembled, and Agrippa exclaimed, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." He also declares this to be a primary characteristic of the ministerial office:—"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." Indeed, my brethren, this is the most important part of our great work. To prevail on men to forsake sin, and to come to Christ and be saved, should be the all-absorbing object of our lives and end of all our preaching. "If we but teach our people Christ," says Baxter, "we shall teach them all. Get them well to heaven, and they will have knowledge enough."

How shall we be qualified for this great work? Permit a slight digression, and yet hardly a digression, to answer this question. Three points of the very first importance will be noticed.

1. The first in order and importance relates to personal religious experience. The preacher must himself have experienced the saving power of that Gospel which he commends to others. The Master says to Peter—and the principle applies to all the successors of Peter—"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." And how otherwise can this work be done? Can a man impart a knowledge of any science to others of which he is himself ignorant? How then shall he open the eyes of others if his own eyes are closed? How shall he turn others

from darkness to light if he is himself in darkness? Can a man successfully labor to turn sinners from the power of Satan unto God who is continuing under Satan's power, or win souls to Christ and commend the riches of His grace who is himself a stranger to the Saviour and knows nothing of the saving grace of God? He will be constantly met with the rebuke, "Physician, heal thyself." A master, in any department of business must have a practical and experimental knowledge of his vocation, if he would be a successful teacher of others. But in our high calling this is more essential than in that of all others. In view of its indispensable necessity the disciples were required to tarry at Jerusalem till they received the power from on high. Without it they were disqualified for their work.

Indeed, till this promise of the Father is verified in the experience of the soul, there is not only an absence of the needed power, but an absolute ignorance of the nature of the great truths to be taught. Hence Jesus says, "Ye must be born again. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." These things are spiritually discerned. The new birth, the reception of power from on high, is necessary to a true perception of what the kingdom of heaven is. He does not perceive that kingdom; he has no proper conception of it; indeed, he knows nothing of its character, its spirit, or its design, until he is himself made a new creature.

And this is a qualification which comes only from on high. It descended on the disciples as cloven tongues of fire and sat upon them. Though we may not be the subjects of a visible Paraclete, yet we must as effectually receive the tongue of fire. It is

a gift which no seminary, however venerable, no theological professors, however learned, can confer. It is an unction imparted not by man. Neither his Grace of Canterbury nor his Holiness of Rome can give it. It is an unction of the Holy One, coming to us, not through the corrupt channels of human nature, nor influenced by the volitions and manipulations of men, however venerable for power, prerogatives or pretensions they may be — but directly from the Holy One Himself.

2. The second qualification which I name is, a mind thoroughly furnished by prayerful study of the Word of God for every good work. While the heart must be kept with all diligence, and the closet must be made the retreat of the soul, where the sacred emotions may be kept aglow by contact with the holy fire which burns on the altar there, yet even this, necessary as it is, will not supply a substitute for study. And if this will not, nothing else will. Some rely on a fertile imagination or an inventive genius to supply their exhausted store of illustration; but they do so at the expense of the spiritual welfare of their congregations, the sturdy growth of Christian character in their brethren, the commanding influence which the churches they serve should exert over society, their own dignity and self-respect, and the honor of the cause of God in the world. Many, doubtless, and great are the difficulties opposing themselves to an itinerant in the pathway of knowledge. The extent of the field of labor allotted to him, the number of churches under his care, the onerous labors of the protracted meetings he is compelled to hold, and, in the case of the junior brethren, the want of permanent homes, present serious obstacles to a due cultivation of the

mind. The improvement in some of our circuits in respect to the last point named is worthy of honorable mention; and those who fail to follow so noble an example may not be surprised at a blight falling on their spiritual interests. But these are not insuperable difficulties. Thousands have overcome even greater; and, without going farther, I might point to some in this Conference, and they not a few, who have passed over and risen above them, and reached no unenviable eminence in science and theology. Let me say to my younger brethren, "What man can do, any man can do if he'll try." "All things are possible to him that believeth." Where there is a thirst for knowledge, a taste for study, and a determination to succeed and to excel, no difficulties will be insurmountable. On the contrary, these obstacles will be made to minister to the aspirant's success.

The Holy Spirit teaches us that the man of God should be thoroughly furnished to every good work. If, at any time in the history of the Church, high intellectual training was needful to those who stand on the walls of Zion, that time is now; for the claims of the Gospel are subjected to forms of criticism unknown to the past, and infidelity attacks the citadel of our faith with a coolness, a dogmatism, and a flippancy hitherto unknown. Unauthenticated facts in physical science are brought forward to disprove the most clearly revealed truths of religion, and cited with a boldness which can be justified only by a universal recognition of their truth; and the pretence of knowledge assumes to browbeat simple faith out of its clearest and most cherished convictions. That the cause of religion will be compelled to succumb to these new enemies of the faith we do not for one

moment entertain a fear; but that souls may be led astray to ruin we cannot doubt. But how shall the Church meet this foe? Only by her watchmen preparing themselves to withstand those who oppose themselves. Error will have the force of truth if unopposed and unrebuked. It is not enough that it be opposed. Faith will ever oppose it; but it must be exposed, and faith alone cannot do this. With the power of working miracles it could; but that power is not now with the Church, nor is that power now necessary. The Church must bring a criticism to bear on the pretensions of science like that which skepticism brings to bear on the faith; and when that is done there will be nothing to fear. When that is done, it will be found that those facts supposed to militate against the faith are mere pretences, and the truth of God will shine out with a radiance and a glory hitherto unknown. Hence will be seen the necessity of high intellectual culture on the part of the ministry.

There are other reasons demanding this, among which the general culture and intelligence prevailing among a large class of our hearers stand forth with prominence. Of this we have not now time to speak at length; but pass to consider

3. The necessary connection between success in the work of the ministry and entire consecration to it. The minister must feel that he is a man of one work, and act daily and constantly on this conviction by bringing to his work an undivided heart. Our Lord has said, "No man can serve two masters." He can only serve the one he loves — the one who has his heart, and but one can have his heart — for he will hate the one and love the other, hold to the one and despise the other. This is especially true

as between God and mammon, Christ and the world, or what is secular and what is spiritual. It is vain for us to hope to serve Christ in this great office while immersed in worldly and secular affairs. We must bring to our work an undivided heart. Whatever divides the heart interferes effectually with the successful execution of the work. Our Lord told the young ruler that if he would be perfect he must sell all, give to the poor, and follow Him. He laid this cross doubtless to test the sincerity and depth of his desire for that perfection which he professedly sought, and, as the sequel proved, his regard for it was not so high as for his worldly possessions. But this sacrifice was necessary as a qualification for the ministerial office to which he doubtless aspired. To be cumbered with these worldly possessions of wealth and power would in great part disqualify him for this Divine employment, and in times of peril would be a snare to him and tempt him to conserve his temporal interests by a sacrifice of the higher interests of the kingdom of God. He who would reject the kingdom of God in deference to worldly interests would, Judas-like, sell his Lord for the same object were he entrusted with its sacred treasures.

But a man whose heart was constantly going out after worldly cares, would fail of success in winning souls to Christ. With his heart on the world he might succeed in winning wealth, or honor, or power; but if he would win souls his heart must be Christ's. And this, after all, is the great end of his calling; for he is "sent to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Success in this eminently depends on entire devotion to it.

III. The benefits which the Gospel proffers to those who receive it afford ample motives to insure us success in this glorious work. These benefits are forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among all them that are sanctified through faith. These benefits are twofold: present and prospective.

1. The first is forgiveness of sins. It is the distinguishing peculiarity and glory of the Gospel that it proclaims the forgiveness of sins. To a race of guilty and condemned sinners, a religion which did not provide for and offer this would be a solemn mockery, trifling with their misery and augmenting the agony of their despair. Indeed it would be no religion at all, for it could never bind sinners in voluntary and hopeful obedience to God. To be sincerely attached to a being who, we are conscious, is unforgiving, angry with, and immutably pledged to punish us, is a natural and an absolute impossibility.

But thank God, we are not made the ministers of such a message as this. The Gospel which we preach assures the sinner of forgiveness. While we go forth with the law in one hand denouncing its anathema against the transgressor, in the other we bear the glad tidings proclaiming mercy. If we are commanded, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins;" we are also authorised to say, "Let the wicked man forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

With such a message to a race crushed by a sense of guilt, of woe, and of danger, who need despair of success? Only convince them that it comes from

God, that it is offered in good faith, that they need it, and that without it they are forever undone; bring it before them in the light of eternity, and the redeeming and saving power of this great Gospel doctrine will be seen in the numbers who will be found seeking and rejoicing in its benefits.

2. The Gospel proffers to those who receive it an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I need not stop to consider the influence which an assured hope of eternal life exercises over those who receive it. My brethren, the present world — which is indeed constantly present to us, and influencing us — this present world needs to have its influencing power neutralised by considerations drawn from the absent, the unseen, and the eternal world. The present world needs no advocate to bring it before us, and its influence to bear upon us, for it is always present itself. Not so with the world to come. It is future, and therefore absent. Because absent it is easily forgotten; and God has appointed us to keep it in memory, and to bring its magnificent realities into contrast with the fleeting and paltry vanities of the present. Could it be present as this world is present, so as to be on equal footing in the comparison, how poor, vain, and contemptible would this world appear! Could we see the sufferings of the world of woe, how trifling would appear the sufferings of this! Could we see the blessedness of the world of glory, how faded and sullied would appear all the glories of this! The riches, honors, pleasures, and decorations of this world affect us more than those of heaven because they are ever present. It is the business of the Gospel minister to make the absent and unseen realities of eternity, objects present and visible to the eye of faith, so as to be

felt as realities. And he who succeeds best in this; he who can make the honors of earth pale beside the glories of heaven; he who can show the dross of earthly treasures in contrast with the preciousness of the riches of heaven; he who can make the grossness of the pleasures of the world to appear in the light of the refined and satisfying enjoyments and delights of the world above, will be most successful in winning souls to Christ and leading them to an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

These are the motives by which our ministry is sustained. These motives appeal to our hearers. Are they sinners? We are authorised to proclaim to them the forgiveness of sins. Are they guilty and condemned? We are authorised to announce to them that their guilt may be cancelled, and that they may be justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Are they bound in the servitude of Satan and the chains of sin? We are authorised to proclaim liberty to the captive and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound. He who conquered death and hell, He who bruised the serpent's head, can sever every chain, and deliver all those who all their lifetime were subject to bondage. Are they immortal, destined to an unending state when the vanities of this are ended? We are authorised to announce to them that they may be made the children of God and heirs to the inheritance of the saints in light. Are they filled with aspirations after a happier life than this? We are authorised to announce to them that life and immortality are brought to light, and to point them to an inheritance among all them that are sanctified by faith in Jesus as a satisfying portion for the soul. What motives these, my brethren,

to affect and influence the minds and hearts of men!

A most important function of the ministerial office is persuasion. The minister should therefore stand before his people in the attitude of an impassioned pleader rather than in that of a cold and formal teacher. If he could keep before him the realities of eternity, and see sinners as they really are, under the wrath of a holy God and exposed to the quenchless flames of the pit of woe, he would hardly feel that he had time for a cold dissertation on science or theology. Rather he would, with tears and entreaties, be imploring them to be reconciled to God. With the disobedient prophet, when driven to his work, he would be crying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed;" or with Paul, be willing to be immolated with Christ for the sake of perishing sinners, if this would be the means of bringing them to the Saviour.

I am not ignorant of the diversities of gifts in the ministry, and that the powers of persuasion are not possessed by all in like degree. All have, however, in some degree, the gift of persuasion. No man, if he only have the Divine baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the power from on high, will be without it. But this power is only obtained in the closet. My brethren, though it condemn myself, I must bear testimony to the truth. This truth is that no man is in a condition to go into the pulpit and address a congregation of perishing sinners except from the immediate presence of Jesus. No man is fit to go there except from his closet, where he has heard the voice of Jesus speaking to his heart, and saying "Go"—"I send thee." It is there the sword of the Spirit receives its edge. It is there the sinews of the soul are trained to wield it with effect. The

closet is the proof-house where all his armor is to be tried. Unless it is tested there, his blunt or broken sword may leave him defenceless before his foe; his artillery may explode, and instead of doing execution on the enemy, may cover himself with dismay and ruin. If there is any condition in which the language of our Saviour, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" receives a clear explication, it is in the case of that minister whose head is full of theology and whose heart is destitute of love to God and to souls. Such a one may delight with the brilliance of his eloquence, he may confound with the power of his logic, and he may astonish by the extent and depth of his research, but he will not be likely to win souls to Christ.

These motives, derived from a consideration of the world to come, appeal also with emphatic force to the ambassador of Christ. With respect to most of us, the only estate and inheritance we have are in heaven,— among them who are sanctified and are with Jesus. How truly can we sing with the saintly Wesley,—

"No foot of land do I possess,
Nor cottage in the wilderness;
A poor wayfaring man,
I dwell awhile in tents below,
And gladly wander to and fro,
Till I my Canaan gain."

How often, my brethren, have we been supported by this blessed hope amid the weariness of the desert and the dangers of the wilderness! It has given vigor to our arm in many a conflict with the powers of darkness, and imparted increased powers of endurance amid the laborious toils of the fields we cultivate. We shall not always

be portionless, we shall not always be seen at disadvantage among our fellows. We shall be satisfied when we awake in His likeness. Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles are enjoying that inheritance now, for the attainment of which they suffered the loss of all things here; and we, their co-heirs, expect to be their companions by-and-bye. Our blessed Lord, "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross and despised the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high;" and we are not ashamed to go to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach; for if we suffer with Him we shall also be glorified together.

Many of our brethren who stood by us side by side on the walls of Zion, cheering us in the midnight watch, on the weary march and the field of conflict, with their stirring tones and hopeful hearts, have left the dangers and sufferings of the field, crossed the flood, and are now in possession of their inheritance. They filled out the requirements of their commission; they have left many witnesses of their faithfulness in turning men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God; they have gone to hear the Master's approving voice, "Well done, good and faithful servant," and they have joined the host beyond the flood. Since our last annual greeting another has gone. Rev. N. S. Greenaway, having patiently waited his Lord, has at last departed. The eloquent tongue is still and the musical voice shall thrill us no more; the dark flashing eye is glazed and the beating heart has ceased to throb. Far from the place of his birth, the home of his childhood, and the friends of his youth, he fell. But he died at his post. Died! "He is not dead, but sleepeth." In due time the Lord shall

come, and they that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. He has gone to possess the inheritance among all them that are sanctified. Thus have we added another to swell the company of the Church above.

It would be a melancholy pleasure, brethren, to pause here, and dwell in reminiscence on the companions of our journey who have reached their home. But I may only stop to speak of one other. He was not a member *ex-officio* of this body, though often one by election, and always by the courtesy of the Conference. You anticipate the name of our late beloved brother, Rev. E. Y. Reese, D.D., editor of the *Methodist Protestant*. That his sun should go down behind so dark a cloud filled us all with inexpressible sadness. But that the gloom and darkness which enshrouded his once brilliant mind rested also on his heart, no one who knew him can for one moment believe. I knew him from my boyhood; for years I have known him intimately and enjoyed largely of his confidence. I have known him not only as the editor, the poet, the preacher, and the eloquent orator, but as the man and the Christian; and I have known few whose religious character and personal worth have commanded my respect and admiration to a degree equal to that of Dr. Reese. He was a simple-hearted, guileless Christian; honorable, generous, benevolent, obliging, prompt in duty, and ever seeking opportunity to do good and to serve the interests of the kingdom of God and of his Church. But he is gone! His seat here is vacant! Who shall fill it? Who can fill it as he did? Identified with the Church from her earliest struggles during his boyhood, he grew up with her, and became so associated with her that it was impossible for us to

think of the Church without thinking of him. But we shall no more behold that light, sprightly, well-poised, graceful form moving in our midst as we meet from year to year. He is gone to meet in a higher, holier Conference. How we loved to look on that broad, expansive brow, that open, lifeful, speaking face, that liquid sparkling eye, so expressive of the various moods of his emotions and his mind! With what breathless interest have we been held entranced by his eloquent tongue, admiring his bold and fearless advocacy of right and his scathing denunciations of wrong! At home in the pulpit, on the platform, and in the arena of debate, and sustaining himself in each by a strong and manly logic, a chaste and graceful rhetoric, and a sprightly and fertile imagination — yet in the pulpit he shined with the most attractive and luminous light — there, self retired, and hid itself behind the Cross. Christ, not the preacher, was prominent. With shining powers of eloquence, he never attempted to shine in the pulpit. Awed by the sacred Presence there, he entered with an entire abnegation of self; and avoiding all meretricious ornament, he told the simple story of the Cross — eloquently, it is true, for it could not be otherwise from him, but with a simplicity which was adapted to the comprehension of childhood.

Such was Dr. E. Y. Reese as he was known to us, and as such we loved and admired him. He was my friend. Was he not yours also? Shall we not drop a tear together over his new-made grave? Shall we not linger there a moment before we say farewell? Shall we ever — shall the Church ever cease to cherish the memory and emulate the piety and faith of those who have been her faithful servants for Jesus' sake? No; but we will enshrine

them in our hearts, animated by the glorious hope of reunion where change and death can never sadden or alloy our permanence of bliss.

But I must dismiss these thoughts, however reluctant I may feel to do so, and release your patience from further trespass.

Our calling! Our work! To open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. What a work! what an incomparable work is this! How noble! how glorious! Not in the glitter and flash which accompany other professions, perhaps; not in the recompense which attaches to other professions, perhaps; but it far surpasses them all in the higher qualities of excellence. The career of the military chieftain is filled with incidents which awaken the admiration of mankind, and he receives a reward and meets with a welcome which the soldier of the Cross will not be offered and may not receive. The ambition of the statesman is gratified with place and power, and he walks on the high places of the earth. But the minister of Jesus may not fix his eye on such a reward. Wealth may fill the coffers of the merchant to repletion, and the learned professions may crown their occupants with distinction and with fortune; but the sent of God must close his eyes to the blandishments of these. He must seek rather to be little and unknown. It must be a small matter with him to be judged of men so he is approved of God. While his career is destitute of the glitter, the pomp, and the emoluments which pertain to these, it brings with it none of their evils. His pathway is not marked by bleeding bodies, broken fortunes, broken hearts, scattered families, and wasted countries. No! His mission is to be

the good Samaritan, to pour oil on the mangled, bleeding body, to bind up its wounds, to arrest the progress of human cruelty or to alleviate the sufferings of its victims; to bind up the broken heart, to raise up the bowed down, and to sympathise with the trodden down; to ratify the covenant of peace between the soul and God, and to promote the spirit of peace between man and his fellow; to work for the removal of the ruin which sin has wrought in the world, and to "make the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and to blossom as the rose." While his work partakes in no degree of the violence of the tempest, and his soul has no chords which vibrate in harmony with the diapason of the storm, his ministrations come down as the gentle dew and rain on the new-mown grass. His quiet and retiring labors may be passed by with indifference, his services may be thanklessly received, his spirit may be misunderstood, and his motives misrepresented by the world, and while he is its greatest benefactor he may suffer most by its neglect — no matter, this is his cross, and he rejoices to bear it. He has bread that the world knows nothing of. Like his Master, his meat is to do the will of Him who sent him. And every witness to the genuineness of his call, every seal he receives to his ministry, every soul he converts from the error of its ways, sends a wave of emotion through the heavenly world, and there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. And every such trophy will be a star in the crown of his rejoicing for ever and ever. Amen.

Christ and His Suffering:

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE, MARCH 11, 1863,

By Rev. D. Evans Reese, D. D.

"For even hereunto ye are called—because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow in His steps."—1. Peter: 11 Chap., 21 v.

My Brethren, the occasion upon which we have assembled is one of no ordinary character.

The history of another Conference year has just closed. Its toils and anxieties, its joys and successes, are all ended, and now through the blessing of Heaven we are permitted to greet each other with brotherly cheer. Before we enter upon the labors of this annual session, it is both *pious* and *prudent* that we devote an hour to the duties and privileges of religious worship. And having been appointed to take the lead in these solemn services, I have selected the language of the text as the theme of our meditations. Beloved brethren, there are three important questions here submitted for our reflection:

I. *Who is Christ?*
II. *In what respect did He suffer?*
III. *For what reason did He suffer?*

The discussion of these questions will embody the substance of doctrine and duty in the text before us.

The first question then claiming our attention is, *Who is Christ?*

On this subject various opinions have been entertained. In the days of Christ's humanity, the Jews, to whom He was immediately sent, regarded Him as a vile impostor, attempting the subversion of their ancient religion, and the imposition of a dangerous heresy upon the people in its stead; in consequence of which they persecuted Him to death.

The heathen bending at the shrine of their idol gods, and sunken in the lowest state of moral degradation, were led to regard Him in the same light, and therefore many of His disciples fell victims to their malice and rage.

In view of these facts the mind is at once disposed to seek after the causes which led to these strange and erroneous opinions. And, in doing so, we find that they are to be traced, on the part of the Jews, to their disappointment in regard to a temporal Prince, or Messiah, who should release them from the yoke of Roman bondage, and exalt them as a nation to the empire of the world; to the severe reproofs which Christ gave them for their perversion of the Scriptures and their hateful hypocrisies, but mainly to His avowal that His Kingdom was not of this world. And, on the part of the heathen, to the fact that the religion of Christ leveled all their former modes of religious worship, and openly and positively condemned those practices which, because they were congenial to the depraved nature of man, were sanctioned by their gods. I believe that the rejection of Christ by the Jews and heathens may be traced to the causes I have named. That others, of minor importance, existed cannot be doubted; yet sure I am that these were the principal causes which led them on in bitter opposition both to Him and His cause.

As in former ages, so in the present, there are to be found men who openly despise the religion of Christ, and professedly denounce the blessed Saviour as a "vile impostor," and all His followers either deceived or designing men. And these men are to be found in all ranks of society. Now the charity of the Gospel requires me to suppose my fellow-men desirous of being honest in the opinions they avow, especially on the great subject of religion. But at the same time it is far from holding the rejectors of Christianity guiltless in the sight of God; on the contrary, it regards such as condemned and self-excluded from the kingdom of heaven. In the exercise of this charity, I would seek for the causes of modern infidelity. Wherefore is it that many are still infidel-rejectors of Christ? So far as we can trace the cause, it is here:—Men are naturally unbelievers. This natural unbelief is cherished by prejudice and fostered by infidel associations and books; and then confirmed by a neglect of that fair, candid, and impartial investigation of the evidences of the truth of Christianity which its importance demands. It is under the influence of causes like these that infidelity grows with our growth and strengthens with our strength, until at last the mind is surrounded with such an intellectual atmosphere as to effectually exclude from the soul all respect for the character of Christ or veneration for the religion He taught.

Having mentioned the opinion of the ancient Jews, of the heathens, and of modern infidelity, respecting the character of Christ, and adverted to the causes which led them to the formation of their opinions, I come now to show what character He sustained in the estimation of true Christians. I

will not stop here to discuss the Socinian heresy, or any other that has been grafted upon it, but will confine our attention to St. Peter (Acts iii: 13, 14, 15), "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you. And killed the Prince of Life, whom God had raised from the dead: whereof we are witnesses." Here you perceive that Peter regarded Christ as the Son of the living God; equal in power, wisdom, justice, truth and holiness with the Father; yet the subject of voluntary humiliation for the sake of man. They (Peter and the early Christians) regarded Him as the Holy One and Just, immaculate in His nature, not the subject of that depravity which is natural to all our fallen race. They regarded Him as the "Prince of Life," the Author of all created beings, to whom we are indebted for spiritual, natural, and eternal life.

The question now arises, and is urged upon our consideration with thrilling interest: If this be the high character of Christ in the estimation of the early Christians, as of the true Church in all ages, on what ground is it predicated? I answer: upon solid, convincing, and abundant evidence. Christ proved Himself to be the Son of the living God, by showing that the predictions of the ancient prophets referred to and were accomplished in Him alone; by the exercise of omnipotent power in the accomplishment of numerous miracles, thus reversing the established laws of nature; by teaching a religion whose purity of precepts and general adaptation to the

condition of man in his present state far transcended the wisdom of the wise or the learning of the philosophers, either in the past or the present ages; by confirming its truth in His own resurrection and ascension to heaven; by the success of the feeblest instruments, in the promulgation of His Gospel in the midst of the most cruel oppressions; and, finally, by giving to every sincere believer an internal evidence that He to this day hath power to forgive sins.

These are some of the evidences which induce Christians to esteem Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind.

I come now to the second question proposed, viz:

II. *In what respect did Christ suffer?*

The fact you see is affirmed in the text, "because Christ also suffered for us." And here I must remark that the sufferings of Christ were voluntary. He might have avoided them all. But it seemed to be necessary for the purpose of human salvation that He should voluntarily suffer, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

But in what respect did He suffer? Let us consider how His reputation was abased. The doctrines which He taught were worthy of a teacher sent from God; the precepts he enjoined were pure, just, benevolent, challenging the world to show them defective; while His spirit, words, and actions were a living commentary upon them all. Indeed, His was a perfect example of devotion, peace, love, truth, temperance, humility, patience, and every other virtue that can adorn our nature. Pilate himself said, "I find no fault in Him." Yet He was charged with the blackest crimes; He was called a

glutton and a wine-bibber; His miracles were ascribed to the power of the Devil. His enemies accused Him of sedition and rebellion against the Roman Emperor, though He wrought a miracle to pay his tribute. He was also charged with blasphemy, and consequently treated with scorn and contempt; dragged to the Cross, the scoff of the multitude and the object of base and heartless revilings. But the sufferings of His reputation shrink into a mere shadow when we consider the agony of His spotless soul, which He endured in consequence of our sins. Take for example His agony in the Garden, where He began to be sore amazed, and where He sweated, as it were, great drops of blood. See there! 'Tis Gethsemane, shrouded in midnight gloom, and the blessed Jesus prostrate is in agony, while the world around Him lies hushed in undisturbed repose. Alone, all alone, He suffers. Even God Himself seems to have withdrawn from Him the sensible assurance of His love, and left Him to feel the exquisite anguish which was due to our sinful souls, in the midst of which He lifts up the plaintive cry, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Now come the ruffian Jews; and while they make the air resound with their fiendish cry of "blood! blood!" they bind Him with cords, blindfold, buffet, and smite Him. Now come the scourge and the robe of mockery and the thorny crown; and now the condemnation and the Cross. Here, on this ignominious Cross, suspended by rugged nails, for hour after hour, hangs the Son of God, the Saviour of men, until at last He bows His head and gives up the ghost. Oh! who can imagine, what pencil can describe, what tongue can utter the sufferings of Jesus in the Garden, or of Jesus on the Cross? No won-

der that an earthquake shakes the land; no wonder that a strange darkness settles upon the earth, now stained with the blood of the Son of God; no wonder that the bodies of the saints are raised, and the veil of the Jewish temple is torn asunder from top to bottom; no wonder that the astonished Centurion cries aloud, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Having thus seen that the sufferings of Christ extended to His reputation, His body, and His soul, I come in the third place to the last inquiry:

III. *For what reason did He suffer?*

This is an important inquiry, and therefore worthy of our serious attention.

1. He suffered that He might confirm the truth of ancient prophecy, prove Himself to be the Saviour of the world, and thus glorify God in the redemption of man. Long had the Prophets foretold His coming. Looking down from the lofty heights of inspiration upon the lapse of successive ages, they pointed to the time, place, and circumstances of His birth, described His character and foretold His sufferings and death. They said He should be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; that He should tread the wine-press alone; that He should be betrayed, condemned, and cut off for the transgression of His people. These were the predictions of the ancient prophets. It was therefore necessary, in view of confirming the truth of these holy utterances, that He should suffer. How else could He have confirmed them? How else could He have proven Himself to be the Saviour of the world? How else glorify God? If He had not suffered precisely in the way He did, then would the prophets have been falsified; then would His claims to the

Messiahship have been unsustained, and the world to this day would have remained without a single ray of hope to cheer the prospect of a coming eternity.

2. He suffered in order that He might present a living example of the virtues taught in His Gospel to the world. This you see is distinctly stated in the text, "Leaving us an example that ye should follow in his steps." His was a perfect example, an example of obedience, resignation, patience, forgiveness, faith, love to God, and to all mankind; and having given us this example, it therefore devolves upon us to follow His steps.

3. It is obvious, from the sacred writings, that Christ suffered and died in order to maintain the dignity and honor of God's moral government over the universe, on the one hand, and accomplish the salvation of a fallen world, on the other. Did He do this? If so, in what way? Thus: in the gift of His Son to suffering and to death, the Divine Being has demonstrated that such is the holiness and justice of His government, that when its laws are violated by any of its subjects, its penalties must be inflicted, either on the offenders themselves or on some substitute offered in their stead. As to His laws and penalties they are immutable in the case before us. Christ is our Substitute. "He suffered for us." Here, then, the honor of the Divine government is fully vindicated, and at the same time the offer of pardon, regeneration, adoption and everlasting life is made to the whole human race. The barrier that lay in the way of man's return to allegiance to his Maker is removed, the sword of justice is returned to its scabbard, and Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life, now stands forth as the Captain of our salvation and the Redeemer of a lost and ruined

world. Through Him, therefore, we may approach the great Eternal and obtain the forgiveness of our sins. Through Him we may have grace to subdue the powers of darkness, rise triumphant above the corruptions of our nature, overcome the world, and with the song of victory on our lips, close our eyes in the silence of death. Yes, my brethren, through Him, lost and ruined souls may ultimately soar aloft, and leaving this fading earth far in the distance below them, find themselves in the gorgeous palace of the Almighty, heirs of immortality and eternal life.

Oh, what amazing love! What boundless condescension and grace! Yes, blessed Jesus! men may reject and despise Thee, they may still reproach Thy name and abuse Thy goodness; but so long as life shall last, oh, let this immortal soul, whom Thou hast redeemed, hold Thee dear in its affections, and have grace to love Thee more and more, until loosened from its fragile dwelling-place, it shall unfold its immortal pinions and wing its way beyond the circling skies to that beautiful realm where the "wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest!"

The subject before us suggests two considerations of importance:

1. As Christ by His sufferings and death has confirmed the predictions of the prophets, and proved Himself to be the Son of God and the Saviour of men, so there is no other medium of salvation possible unto men. If they neglect and despise Him, they neglect and despise the only Name given under heaven whereby men can be saved. On the reception, therefore, of Jesus as the Saviour is depending the incorruptible glory of eternal life; on the re-

jection of Him as such, the untold agonies of an awful hell.

2. As Christ has suffered for us, that is, made an atonement for the sins of the whole world, no sinner need despair of mercy. Peter exhorted his Jewish hearers to repent and be converted that their sins might be blotted out, although they denied and rejected Christ and nailed Him on the cross. And, think you, this would have been the case if the mercy of God, through the blood of Jesus, was not extended to the whole world? Well may the poet, inspired by this glorious truth, indite these impressive words:

"Its streams the whole creation reach,
So plenteous is the store;
Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough forevermore."

My brethren, I cannot take my seat without briefly adverting to the solemn and impressive events of the past year. No other year in the calendar of our history has been so fruitful of lessons of our mortality. Several of our beloved brethren have closed their earthly labors and have gone to their reward. Three of them were well-known throughout our churches — men of ability, of experience, and of signal usefulness in the Church of Christ. Bros. Wright, Roby, Ewell, and Vorden have departed from the service of the Church on earth to enjoy the glory and happiness of the Church in heaven. We shall never mingle with them again in the scenes and labors of our common Zion; but we anticipate a glorious interview with them and others of our departed when the Master shall call us home,—

"There friends shall meet again
Who have loved."

The Preacher: his Authority and his Work:

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, MARCH 9, 1864.

By Rev. John J. Murray, D. D.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."—Ephesians iii: 8.

Low views of the Gospel, exalted ones of self, characterise the man whom sin hath infatuated. Exalted views of the Gospel, lowly ones of self, characterise the man whom Divine grace hath made wise unto salvation. Such a man was the author of our text. Abased by sin, elevated by grace, he gloried in nothing but the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which He was crucified unto the world and the world unto Him. The text is the overflowing of a grateful heart. Humility, the most profound, here finds appropriate expression. Here, also, wonder and delight break forth. The mind of the Apostle, reverting to the gloomy scenes in his former life, pronounced judgment upon himself as the chief of sinners. Yet, even to him, the saving grace of God had extended. He had been enlightened, regenerated, ennobled. Not only saved, himself, he had been called to the high office of saving his fellow-men. A leader in the diabolical work of persecution, he had been called to take a distinguished part in the ministry of reconciliation — a

work so holy and beneficent, that angels themselves might feel honored were they permitted to share its toils and rewards. Hence the exclamation: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

The text presents for consideration: *The Preacher, his Appointment to the Ministry, and the Design of his Appointment.*

I. The Preacher.—He had been an uncompromising opponent of the Gospel. Born and educated a Jew, he had all the reverence for the ancient faith which characterised his people, and all their intense abhorrence of apostacy. Receiving and cherishing the opinion, generally entertained by his countrymen, that the Messiah would appear in visible splendor, a king and conqueror reigning in Jerusalem, he scouted the idea that a man of humble parentage, without the prestige of wealth or conquest, a man whom the rulers rejected, whose followers were the poor and illiterate, could be the long-promised deliverer. A Pharisee, strict in observance of all the formalities that had gained for that sect the reputation of superior sanctity, and complacently regarding himself as blameless in the eye of the law, he was not disposed to hear of the necessity of any other righteousness than that which he possessed — still less of righteousness by faith in one whom he regarded as a criminal, justly crucified for blasphemy and imposture. Provoked beyond endurance that the name of Jesus should be associated with that of the Christ, zealous for the glory of Judaism, and impatient for the extirpation of what he regarded as a most odious heresy, he de-

lighted in pursuing with vengeful feelings, all that had come under its influence. "I verily thought with myself," he said at a later period, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority of the chief priests; and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."

Saul of Tarsus was sincere. He was not aware of the diabolical nature of the work in which he was engaged. But his conduct is justified neither by his sincerity nor his ignorance. We do not regard it with the extreme disgust which such conduct excites when it proceeds from pure malevolence, or the lust of gain; nevertheless we must hold it up in strong disapprobation. Ignorance is excusable when it is inevitable; sincerity may be a plea in mitigation of punishment. But it is every man's duty to employ the available means of information; and, if, through indolence or prejudice, any one neglect to inform himself, the consequences of his error will justly be laid to his account. We pity those who stumble in the dark, but withhold our sympathy from those who bandage their eyes in daylight, lest they may discover that they are walking in forbidden paths. Jesus of Nazareth had presented the credentials of His Messiahship, but the bigoted Pharisee cared not to examine them. God was merciful because he did these things ignorantly in unbelief; but he himself could never refer to this part of his life, after he had been forgiven, without the deepest humiliation.

But Saul of Tarsus, from the hour that Christ appeared to him near the city of Damascus, whither he was going on an errand of persecution, was another man. That invisible hand by which he was stricken to the earth and deprived of sight — those solemn words of inquiry, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" — the tone of authority in which he was bidden to rise and stand on his feet — the gracious intimation, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in me" — these things, and his subsequent enlightenment, as sudden as his miraculous blindness, changed the entire purpose and complexion of his life. We lose sight of the persecutor and contemplate the apostle. Ardent, determined, courageous, and persevering as ever, his whole nature was sanctified and all his powers employed in the service of Christ. With enlightened zeal he battled for the truth. His weapons were not carnal. Giving no quarter to wrong-doing, he could weep for the wrong-doer. He was ready to undertake journeys, going farther to preach Christ than he had ever gone to persecute His disciples — willing, as a preacher of the Cross, to endure what he never could have endured when Christ crucified was the object of his bitterest hate. Abundant in labors and in sufferings, at home and abroad, honored with manifestations of Christ and the power of working

miracles, he was yet as humble as a child, esteeming himself less than the least of all saints, and counting himself not worthy to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the Church of God. Tender among his converts as a mother among her children, he was all boldness in the presence of wilful opposers of the truth, and ready to face tortures and death in its defence. "What mean ye," he said in tender expostulation, when some of the brethren, solicitous for his safety, would have dissuaded him from going to Jerusalem — the place whither duty called him — "What mean ye, to weep and to break mine heart? for I am not ready to be *bound* only, but to *die* in Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." On a previous occasion he had said to the elders of the Church in Miletus, "And now behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

Such a man was the author of our text. Oh that every preacher had the spirit of Paul!

II. His Appointment to the Ministry.— Paul received his commission from the Lord Jesus. Hence he styles himself "an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but of Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead" (Gal. i.: 1). The ministerial office is not to be assumed or laid down at the caprice of any individual. The true minister of Jesus is a spiritual shepherd of the flock

whereof the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer. Some men, there is reason to believe, have thrust themselves into this office, actuated solely or chiefly by a regard to the advantages which it seems to hold out in respect to ease or wealth or social position. Regarding it as a profession which they might choose or reject without guilt, they have selected the ministry, as one chooses law, another medicine, a third agriculture, and a fourth trade, in obliviousness of the responsibility of the calling. But you, my brethren, I am persuaded, hold that no man should present himself as a candidate for holy orders without a reasonable conviction that he is "inwardly moved thereto by the Holy Ghost." In what way the mind of the Spirit is communicated, in particular instances, it is not incumbent on me to show; but, obviously, in every case, he that is called of God not only possesses a natural adaptation to the work, that is to say, ability to apprehend and teach the truths of the Gospel, but spiritual qualifications also. He is a converted man; for "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." How can he exhort men to repent if he is impenitent? How shall he speak of things that are spiritually discerned if he has no spiritual discernment? How shall he insist upon the necessity of holiness, or urge men to go on to perfection, if he knows nothing of a hungering and thirsting after righteousness? How shall he comfort others if he himself has not been comforted of God? The motives of a true minister are pure. The love of Christ constrains him. The hope of winning souls, and not the prospect of worldly advancement, allures him. A sense of responsibility will not allow him to remain silent. He sees the sword coming; and if the people die

in their sins, how shall he be clear of their blood, unless he sound the trumpet and give the alarm? A dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto him, and "woe is" him if he "preach not the Gospel." He has the spirit of self-sacrifice, and is willing both to labor and to suffer reproach, if necessary, because he trusts in "the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially them that believe." He begins the work with self-distrust but confidence in God; and sinners turned from darkness unto light, and saints helped forward in their heavenly way, attest his calling from on high.

A man moved by selfish considerations to enter the ministry, while doing much harm, may by an overruling Providence become an instrument of doing some good. He can repeat sacred lessons though he does not understand them; and the words of truth that fall from his lips, entering good and honest hearts, like seed falling upon good ground (though it may have been scattered with no good intent), may produce the fruit of holiness. The unwitting instrument of saving others, he may lose his own soul. As the scaffolding which is used in erecting a building is rejected when the building is complete, so the men who have proclaimed the Gospel without realising its saving power, will hear from the Judge the dreadful words of disapprobation, "I never knew you, workers of iniquity."

Paul sought no other authorisation of his ministry than the commission which he received from the Lord Jesus. Twelve apostles, at that time, were acknowledged by the Church. Judas had fallen, but Matthias had taken his place. Is it not obvious that if there had been no legitimate door to the ministry but that which is opened by the imposition of

hands, Paul would not have felt himself authorised to assume ministerial functions without formal recognition and authorisation by his apostolic colleagues? But no such thought occurred to his mind as that of the necessity of legitimising his labors by recourse to them. "When it pleased God," he wrote to the Galatians (i: 15–17), "to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me." Satisfied with his call, he proceeded with his work. Nor was the validity of his ministrations called in question, either by his fellow-apostles or by any other respectable persons in the Church.

It may be said that this was an extraordinary call, and not to be used in justification of the assumption of ministerial functions, in our day, without recognition by the regularly ordained successors of the Apostles. Paul's calling, indeed, was extraordinary. So was his office. In what was peculiar to their office, the Apostles have no successors. They saw the Lord Jesus in person, and received their commission immediately from Him. They were ordained to be witnesses of His resurrection. They were endowed with miraculous gifts, spake with tongues, discerned spirits, healed the sick, raised the dead. Where are our modern Apostles? Who has seen the Lord Jesus? Who is an eye-witness of His resurrection? Who speaks with tongues? Who heals the sick? Who raises the dead? Who lays on hands and imparts the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost? Where then are the signs of Apostleship in these latter days? And by what channel has the stream of exclusive authority come down to

us? We are referred to a list of Roman bishops through whom Church dignitaries trace their ecclesiastical lineage. But what assurance have we that there is no fracture in this chain of reputed succession? We hear something about a tradition that St. Paul went to Britain and founded the Church in that island; and hence we are invited to conclude that Apostolic succession, independent of Rome, has descended to our time. And, upon the authority of this tradition, forsooth, we are to repudiate the great majority of Protestant ministers, and acknowledge the exclusive claims of a small minority who are, in no respect, their superiors. Moreover, we are to conclude that the Great Head of the Church hath so restricted Himself to one channel that He will on no account communicate the grace of the ministry through any other — though in days of old God did set aside the house of Eli and choose the house of Samuel to minister before Him. More than this, we are to believe that men of corrupt doctrines and scandalous lives, as were many of those through whom Apostolic succession is traced, are the sanctified conduits of Divine authority; and men of pure faith and exemplary lives, and abundant labors, yielding gracious fruits, are unauthorised administrators of holy ordinances, followers of Korah, Dathan and Abiram; and this, simply because they have not felt it necessary to be installed in their sacred offices by the successors of the corrupt ecclesiastics of the dark ages. Can you believe this, my brethren? Or can you receive, as applicable to this argument, the illustration drawn from political affairs, in which it is conceded, that the moral delinquency of an officer does not invalidate his official acts regularly performed? It is a mere assumption that Christ

recognises wicked men as officers in His Church, and it is contradicted by the Apostle, who says, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

Successors of the Apostles! Their only successors are men of apostolic faith and love, earnestly engaged in the ordinary labors of the ministry at home, or going far away among the Gentiles, to preach unto the heathen "the unsearchable riches of Christ." If, like Timothy, the grace of God has been conferred upon them by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, the true Επισκοποι of the Scriptures, they have all the recognition from the Church that is requisite. Or, if any of them have been raised up in an extraordinary manner, for an extraordinary work, why may they not begin the work like Paul himself—"not conferring with flesh and blood, or going up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before" them?

III. The Design of his Appointment:—"To preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Preaching is pre-eminent among ministerial functions. The sacraments are important institutions, to be venerated and prized in the Church; but Paul showed his estimate of the comparative value of one of them, at least, when he wrote, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." To preach was his great business: and to preach what? The question is interesting in our day, because so many assume to instruct the pulpit in relation to its duties, and take it upon themselves to criticise it with unreserved freedom—interesting also because occupants of the pulpit have varied so much in their

conceptions of its legitimate sphere. Happily, Paul has answered the question for us:—Appointed to preach—not metaphysical subtleties, not cold morality—not spiritualism, not animal magnetism, not socialism, not political economy, or science in general, or any schemes of philanthropy or reform in contradistinction from the Gospel—but "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

And is not this enough for the profoundest mind and the most sympathetic heart? Has any one exhausted the theme? Does it not touch all human relations? Are not men made better and happier, in every respect, in proportion as they receive the unsearchable riches of Christ? For my part, I do not feel circumscribed by the theme; but I do feel my inability to apprehend and expound it as I would. How incomplete our thoughts, how poor our language, in comparison with "the unsearchable riches of Christ!"

Let us think of the riches of His Divine nature. In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. To Him belong the riches of Omnipotence; for He upholds all things by the word of His power. Yea, in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Vainer than the attempt of the child whom Augustine saw trying, with a shell, to empty the ocean into a hole which the child had dug in the sand, would be our attempts to comprehend the riches of His nature.

And the riches of His grace, how unsearchable! He gave Himself a ransom for all, and He invites all to come unto Him and live. He declares, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." He calls, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." When He was

dying He prayed for His murderers, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and when He had risen from the grave and was about to ascend into heaven, He commanded His disciples to preach repentance and remission of sins, in His name, among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem!* Peter and the dying thief had obtained forgiveness previously; now it was to be offered to those who had cried, "Crucify him!" Saul of Tarsus was to obtain it; and then it was to be proclaimed to the Gentiles. And how many thousands, since that day, have repented and been forgiven! And still the riches of His grace are unsearchable! Thousands — millions more may live through Him. Yea, whosoever will, may come and take of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Think of the riches of His grace to believers. How many have been instructed, supported, comforted, purified, and crowned; and yet His inexhaustible love abounds as it did in the beginning. Millions of millions may come to Him and be satisfied, and yet His fulness will not be diminished a single drop. Believers, you are rich in your Redeemer. Do you need wisdom? Ask; for "He giveth liberally and upbraideth not." Do you need consolation? He will send you the Comforter. Are you tempted? His grace is sufficient. Are you in tribulation? Be of good cheer: He has overcome the world. Are you persecuted? Great is your reward in heaven. Have you care? Cast it all upon Him: He careth for you. Do you think of dying, and fear that you will not be prepared? "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;" but He has destroyed the sting of death, and broken the power which the law gave it, by His atoning

sacrifice; and if you hold fast your confidence begun, you will be enabled to exclaim, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you dread the grave? Jesus has been there —

> "The graves of all His saints He blessed,
> And softened every bed;
> Where should the dying members rest,
> But with their dying Head?"

But He came forth! — and all His saints shall come forth. We know not how long their dust shall slumber; but their spirits, soon as the silver cord that detains them is loosed, shall mount up, to be forever with the Lord. And their bodies shall not remain under the dominion of death. Christ hath redeemed their bodies also; and these, spiritual, incorruptible, immortal, shall be like the glorious body of their Lord.

And what shall we say of the riches of His glory? Who can imagine the splendor of His exaltation? Who can comprehend the fulness of His joy? But His saints shall be like Him. Where He is they shall be also. Whatever He enjoys they shall enjoy. Their bliss, like His own, shall be everlasting. It may be increasing forever — it can never diminish. His resources are infinite. Thousands of ages in His presence are less, in comparison, than the small moments of our earthly existence. What we would call a million of years elapses, and nothing is taken from their lives; for Jesus lives, and they have eternal life in Him.

Here we pause. Paul has been eighteen hundred years in heaven — yet with all he knows and all he feels, the riches of Christ to him are still unsearchable; and when we shall have been in heaven as

long as Gabriel, the only effect of all our experience as redeemed and glorified spirits will be to enlarge our wonder, increase our gratitude, and exalt our rapture in the contemplation of a theme as incomprehensible then as it was in the beginning—"The unsearchable riches of Christ!"

Brethren, unto us, who are so far less than he that esteemed himself "less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that we should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Let us magnify the grace. Let us endeavor to appreciate the honor and the responsibility. Angels rejoiced to bring to men the good news of a Saviour born. We preach the Saviour's finished work, His glorious righteousness, His resurrection, ascension, intercession and reign. Let us with the angels sing "Glory to God in the highest." Let us be faithful in our high vocation. Then, though poor, we may make many rich. Then, though the world applaud us not, the Lord of all worlds will say "Well done!" Let others aspire to the honors of statesmanship; grasp at the blood-stained laurels of the soldier; enjoy the well-earned renown of the scholar, artist, or scientific explorer; the pomp and luxury of wealth, or the fascinations of pleasure: sufficient to us the honor and pleasure of living to do good, and dying to live forever.

"Happy, if with my latest breath,
I may but gasp His name;
Preach Him to all, and cry in death,
Behold! behold the Lamb."

"That I may Win Christ."

A SERMON DELIVERED BEFORE THE MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH, EASTON, MARYLAND, MARCH, 1865.

By Rev. A. S. Eversole, M. D.

"That I may win Christ."—Phil. iii: 8.

This is the language of Paul, the great champion for Christ and His glorious cause; once Saul, the persecutor of the disciples of Jesus, now the intrepid and zealous advocate of their cause. How well and appropriately might he say that with the subjects of Divine grace "old things are passed away and all things are become new!" What a change must have taken place in his own experience! Compare the man with himself—now a blasphemer of the name of Jesus, and now asking at His feet, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Now persecuting His followers, and now preaching the faith he once despised and endeavored to destroy. Now living a Pharisee and boasting of his Jewish privileges and attainments; now saying, "What things were gain to me those I count loss for Christ: yea, doubtless; and I count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." Paul tells us what he was ambitious of and

reached after: it was the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord — a believing, experimental acquaintance with Christ — not a mere speculative, but experimental, practical, and efficacious knowledge of Him. This knowledge is the excellency of knowledge. There is an abundant, transcendent excellency in the Christian religion above all knowledge of nature and improvements of human wisdom; for it is adapted to the cause of fallen man, guilty sinners, and furnishes them with all they need and all they can desire and hope for, with all saving wisdom and all saving grace. To gain this knowledge was the height of Paul's ambition; for this he sacrificed his Jewish privileges; and not only his Jewish privileges, but *all things*. Hence his language: "Yea, doubtless"— his expression rises with a holy triumph and elevation — "Yea, doubtless; and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." But had he not won Him already? So far as the enjoyment of His love in his heart was concerned, he had won Him long since. He had served and enjoyed Him for many years, and he had a good hope of eternal life — a well-grounded hope, a hope that served as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, a hope that buoyed him up amidst the greatest conflicts and the sorest trials and afflictions. But intense affection makes us think we are never sure enough of the object. Intense delight in any good makes us long after more fruition. There is this difference between a convinced sinner and an experienced Christian: the former desires only from a sense of want; the latter desires also from the relish of the enjoy-

ment, for he has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and hence the more earnestly cries, "Lord, evermore give me of this bread," for taste provokes appetite. The true believer delights in the means of grace, in drawing nigh to God and drinking out of the stream that emanates from the Throne. His language is:

> "Insatiate, to this spring I fly;
> I drink, and yet am ever dry."

His aspirations are heavenward. His soul goes out after God. There is an ardent desire for more grace, more love, which is to the devoted follower of Christ "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." He presses "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." How is this prize to be obtained? How is Christ to be won? eternal life to be secured? — which was the great desideratum with the Apostle Paul, and with *all* devoted Christians.

I. *Desire is necessary* — ardent, intense desire.

We must be convinced of our need, or we shall not long after Christ; must feel that without the Bread of Life we must perish forever. The soul needs food suited to its nourishment, adapted to its nature, without which it must perish; of this we must feel sensible, which will excite within us holy desires. By thus coming to Jesus, having the proper disposition, we have the warrant that we shall succeed, that we shall receive the desired object. *Ask*, says Jesus, *ask;* represent your wants and burdens to God, and refer yourselves to Him for support and supply according to promise, "and ye shall receive." Ask as a beggar asks alms. Matthew Henry, commenting on this subject, says, "They that would be

rich in grace must betake themselves to the poor trade of begging, and they will find it a thriving business." "Seek and ye shall find." *Seek* as for a thing of value that ye have lost, or as the merchantman that seeks goodly pearls, and the promise is ye *shall* find. Knock as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door, and it shall be opened. Thus ardent and intense desire, or hungering and thirsting after righteousness, evinced by corresponding effort and manifest solicitude, will be crowned with success. The promise of Christ will be verified to all who come to Him in the spirit of meekness, sincerity, and faith. Oh how important that we thus present ourselves before Christ! Let me urge upon you, my dear friends, the necessity of coming to Jesus in the spirit of contrition, ardently desiring to "win Christ," to make Him your own, to possess Him in your hearts, to love Him supremely. Our desire should be that our hearts were fully imbued with the spirit of Christianity, and our hopes high for glory. Unawakened sinners have no such elevated desires; their desires are of a low, sensual, groveling, sordid character. To gratify their senses is the height of their ambition. The worldling's desire is to win wealth, the ambitious to win worldly fame, the sensualist's desire is to gratify his appetites and passions. They are ever looking down on the earth in pursuit of those objects which, though pleasing for a moment, will cloy on the palate, will be entirely unsatisfying, and bring death to their votaries. But the Christian desires that which is elevating in its character, that which tends to dignity and happiness; he desires that which brings peace and joy to his soul. The awakened sinner

cries, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! I would order my cause before Him, I would fill my mouth with arguments." He desires to "win Christ." Prompted by this desire, he seeks after Him; agonises at a throne of grace for pardon and salvation. Excited by deep solicitude and anxious concern, he cries,—

> "Father, I stretch my hands to Thee;
> No other help I know.
> If Thou withdraw Thyself from me,
> Ah! whither shall I go?"

He resolves,—

> "I'll go to Jesus, though my sins,
> Have like a mountain rose;
> I know His courts, I'll enter in
> Whatever may oppose."

Such are his emotion and deep anxiety about his moral depravity, and his intense desire to be saved, to be delivered from the power and guilt of sin, and to "win Christ." The true believer ever desires more of Christ; desires to be assimilated into His likeness, desires to grow in grace; like Paul, forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forth to those things that are before, he presses toward the mark (the perfection of holiness) for the prize. His aspirations are always heavenward. He is ever engaged in working out his salvation with fear and trembling, laboring to enter into that rest which remaineth for the people of God. He strives, agonizes, to enter in at the strait gate.

But "to win Christ" and secure eternal life and glory, an immortal, happy existence, we observe:

II. *That Sacrifice is necessary.*

Sacrifice is indispensable; and when the desire is supremely urgent and active, and nothing can be a

substitute for the object, we shall be ready to part with whatever stands in competition with Him (Christ). Hence we read in the Scriptures of selling all to buy the pearl of great price. Buying here does not signify giving an equivalent for Him: who would think of this? But as in buying, something is parted with for the purpose, so it is here; and if the pride of reason, or self-righteousness, or our worldly connections and interests, or our sins, keep us back from Him, we must forsake them *all.*

1. To enter upon the Christian course it is necessary to forsake sin in all its forms; to turn aside from the path of sensual enjoyments and worldly amusements, such as the theatre, the ball-room, the drinking-saloon, and all haunts of vice and places of sensual pleasure and gratification. We are not even allowed to countenance them with our presence, or a word or smile of apparent approval. We are to abstain from the very appearance of evil. These enjoyments are incompatible with Christianity. Come out from among them, is the mandate of Heaven. Thus we are to distinguish ourselves by abstaining from those things which are purely of a worldly and sensual character.

2. We must sacrifice worldly honor and distinctions, if necessary. Paul shows how he had quitted his privileges as a Jew and a Pharisee. He was a man of distinguished privileges; his education was profound; he could boast of being circumcised the eighth day, not at ripe age as a proselyte, but born among God's peculiar people, and dedicated to Him from infancy, being solemnly admitted into the visible Church in the most regular way; of being of the stock of Israel — not a son of a proselyte, nor of the race of the Ishmaelites or Edomites; of the

tribe of Benjamin, in which Jerusalem and the Temple stood, and who kept close to God and His worship when the ten tribes revolted and fell off to idolatry; "an Hebrew of the Hebrews," that is an Israelite on both sides, by father and mother, and from one generation to another; "as touching the law a Pharisee;" brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, an eminent doctor of the law, he was a scholar, learned in all the learning of the Jews. Touching the righteousness which is of the law, he was blameless. Being born in Tarsus, he possessed the privileges of a Roman. All his connections and alliances, religious, educational, national, and political, tended to worldly distinction. But he sacrificed them all for Christ. "What things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless; and I counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." What a noble example! how worthy of imitation!

Like Moses, he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures and honors of this world; he knew, as he had declared, that the "fashion of this world passeth away." Paul's educational and other advantages would have secured to him riches, worldly honor, and sensual enjoyments, had he made choice of the world instead of the pure religion of Christ, the despised Nazarene; but he sacrificed all these things for the excellency of the religion of Jesus. The treasures of this world corrupted not his soul nor fascinated his heart. The honors of earth elicited not his desires; and the pleasures of this world and sensual enjoyments, which might have been at his command and enjoyed to the

fullest extent, he magnanimously and in the fear of God surrendered. What an illustrious example! What a glorious example! Oh my brethren, let us endeavor to profit by it. Paul counted all things but dross that he might win Christ; and while he sacrificed, he possessed the excellency of knowledge, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Like Enoch, he had the testimony that he pleased God. Paul's religious character warrants the conclusion that he shared largely in this enjoyment; amid outward afflictions he felt Christ within. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name," for such a religion. Let us endeavor to imitate his noble example, or rather the example of Christ, who became of no reputation, took upon Himself the form of a servant, condescended to the humble walks of life, while His thoughts were about His Father's business. We are required to walk in His steps, to imitate His example, as did the Apostle Paul.

3. *Pecuniary sacrifice is necessary.*

When our pecuniary interests or worldly possessions come in competition with Christ and His cause, and consequently with our spiritual interests, they must be willingly and promptly sacrificed; when our hearts are so wedded to them that we cannot love God, then we must give them up, if commanded to do so by Christ. Hence the command to the rich young man who came to Christ to inquire what he should do to inherit eternal life. Christ directed or commanded him to cut loose from the world, to go and sell all that he had and give it to the poor, and follow Him, and he should have treasure in heaven. He saw, no doubt, that that young man's besetting sin was the love of the world, and

that his undue attachment to his worldly possessions, though he was an amiable and moral young man, would stand in the way of his salvation. Jesus may have had some special and important work for this young man to perform which made it necessary for him to give up his worldly interests, and thereby obey the injunction of Christ in regard to his earthly possessions; and consequently he should not have hesitated, as his salvation and usefulness depended upon compliance with this authoritative behest.

Thus men are sometimes called from lucrative employments to enter the ministry where sacrifice of a pecuniary character, in many instances, has to be made. So with Paul. He might have served as a professor in some literary institution, or something still more lucrative; he conferred not with flesh and blood, but gave up all. "I have suffered the loss of all things that I might win Christ." He entered the sacred ministry and subjected himself to poverty, persecution, and many hardships for the cause of Christ. The Gospel of Christ was his grand theme; he gloried in the Cross, and desired to glory in nothing else; his soul was so absorbed with this grand theme that he was willing to suffer and even die for the cause of Christ. A similar holy ambition should fire our zeal. Ministers and laymen, the entire membership, are required mutually to make sacrifices to advance the glorious cause of Christ: the minister by giving up his worldly pursuit, and the layman by paying liberally to the support of the Gospel — not giving as it is generally termed, but paying; for it is a just debt, a moral obligation which we are just as much bound in moral honesty to respect and discharge as the husbandman is to pay a man who labors on his farm. "The

laborer is worthy of his hire." And yet there are many persons who pay little or nothing to support the Gospel, who nevertheless wish to maintain a respectable standing in the Church, and enjoy the same privileges with others who pay liberally to support the Gospel; and it sometimes occurs that such persons are among the most fastidious and exacting in regard to the ministers who serve them. Where is the moral honesty of such persons? We hesitate not to give it as our deliberate opinion that such persons would refuse to meet any other pecuniary obligation if they were not bound to do it by the law of the land. Where then is their honesty if they have correct moral perception, or the facilities to be enlightened on this subject? Liberality in the support of the Gospel is a Christian duty, and consequently should be regarded as a privilege.

Under the Jewish dispensation liberality was required to the amount of one-tenth of their income. Equal liberality should be practised under a more liberal dispensation. The law was never repealed. Says Paul, "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple, and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar"—referring to the regulations under the Jewish dispensation, in regard to the Levites and priests—"even so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." This must be regarded in the light of a command.

It reads "Should live of the Gospel"—not grow rich or speculate in it, but have such a maintenance or support as to keep their minds free, so as not to be harassed with cares. The salary of a minister should not be regarded as a gift merely, any more

than that of a congressman, or a physician, a lawyer, a teacher, or a laborer on a farm. He has a claim to it, and God has commanded that it shall be paid. Moreover, it is a matter of stipulation and compact by which a people agree to compensate him for his services; and yet is there anything in the shape of debt where there is so much looseness as in regard to this subject? Are men usually as prompt in this as they are in paying a physician, a merchant, or a mechanic? Ministers have no right to expect a support unless they labor to promote the interests of the Church. If they spend their time in speculation, or secular pursuits or idleness, lounging about instead of attending to their appropriate work, they have no right to expect the Church to give them a liberal support. "The laborer is worthy of his hire"—not the idler. The minister who devotes his mental, moral and physical energies to the Church, ought to receive a respectable compensation. Are not the usefulness of faithful ministers, and the happiness of the people and the honor of religion, intimately connected with obeying the rule of our Lord Jesus Christ in this respect? There are many noble, discriminating and generous souls who look at this subject in its true light and act accordingly. Be it said to their praise, they are the support of the Church. They not only regard it a duty, but a privilege, a high and precious privilege, to help to support such a glorious cause. But there are many, very many, who either lack the necessary discrimination or moral honesty to meet their obligations to the Church. Mutual sacrifice is necessary to carry on the grand and noble cause of Christianity, in comparison with which worldly considerations dwindle into insignificance. Enlarged benevolence

is an indispensable characteristic of a disciple of Christ. And shall we not be more than indemnified if we "win Christ"? All our sacrifices fade into insignificance in comparison with the prize to be won.

Let us notice then

III. *The Prize.* What a prize is He!

The language of men and angels fails to do Him justice. The sacred writers, though inspired, labor for language and imagery to aid us to conceive a little of His worth. "That I may win Christ;" may have Him for my Saviour and Lord; may have an interest in all the offices that He sustained, and in all that He hath done and suffered for the salvation of man, and may be made a partaker of the benefits which He hath procured for me, and be found in Him, vitally united to Him by faith and love; that I may know Him in His humiliation and exaltation, His grace and glory, as my wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, or as my complete Saviour; that I may ultimately see Him as He is, and be with Him where He is, to behold His face in glory. "I go," says Jesus, "to prepare a place for you; I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." "I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table and sit on thrones." This prize is called a crown of glory that fadeth not away, a crown of life, that is, an immortal happy existence. It is called a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, of which the Apostle says: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in

us:" Again, after he had finished his course, and was about to be offered, he said in the spirit of Christian triumph: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day; and not unto me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." To win Christ is to win heaven with all its glorious realities. It is to be released from the toils and afflictions and sorrows of earth, and to be exalted to God's right hand in heaven, where the wicked cease to trouble and where the weary are forever at rest; to look into the radiant and smiling face of Jesus—

"In rapturous awe on Him to gaze
Who bought the sight for me,
And shout and wonder at His grace
To all eternity."

"There all our griefs are spent,
There all our sorrows end,
We cannot there the fall lament
Of a departed friend."

"In that eternal day
No clouds or tempests rise,
There gushing tears are wiped away
Forever from our eyes."

Oh, my brethren and sisters, what are all our sacrifices and sufferings here, if heaven with all its rapturous enjoyments is to be the compensation?

May we have grace faithfully to perform our duty to the Church of Christ, that we may in the end secure eternal life, or "win Christ." Amen.

Christ and His Ministers:

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE MARYLAND CONFERENCE, OF THE METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH, AT THE OPENING SESSION IN THE "STARR CHURCH," BALTIMORE, MARCH 14TH, 1866.

By the Rev. James M. Elderdice.

"And he had in his right hand seven stars."—Rev. i: 16.

This text calls our attention to a wonderful scene of vision; and this vision was no vain illusion or fancied phantom of the mind of man; but it was a real revelation from God. The man chosen to be the honored seer of this heavenly vision revealed, was John, the beloved disciple. He was a servant of Christ, an apostle, an evangelist, and a prophet. This man, greatly beloved of God and highly honored, who has reflected his heavenly visions upon the Church and upon the world, was once a humble fisherman. His origin, parentage, birthplace, and employment were all obscure and lowly. In the obscurity of his lowly life he heard of a certain Nazarene, whose earthly origin was humble as his own, whose parents were poor, whose birthplace was a stable, who was contemptuously called "the son of the carpenter;" who, though he went about doing good (teaching and healing), yet he was despised of men, and had not where to lay his head. John heard his words and saw his works. And perceiving the wisdom of his words and the power

of his works, he was convinced that this man who was born in a stable in Bethlehem, was indeed "The ruler of Israel;" that this "Son of the carpenter" was indeed "The Son of the Highest;" that this despised "Nazarene" was indeed the long foretold, long looked-for "Messiah;" that this homeless wanderer in the world, was none other than the "Redeemer of the world," the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." John believed on Him, followed Him, learned of Him, loved Him and leaned upon His bosom; desiring to be very near that congenial heart which beat with the pulsations of an everlasting love. He stood by the Cross of his loving Lord, and heard and wrote the last words He spake before He died, "It is finished." He saw Him again after He arose from the dead, with the print of the nails in His hands and the wound of the spear in His side; and recognising his "Beloved," he exclaimed, "It is the Lord!" He followed His departing Lord out to Bethany and up Mount Olivet, and there received His parting blessing, and steadfastly gazed after Him as He ascended up toward heaven until a cloud received Him out of sight. John saw and testified and wrote these things, "and we know that his testimony is true;" and for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ he was banished as an exile to the lonely isle of Patmos. It was while he was there, upon that solitary sea-girt island, that this wonderful scene of vision burst from heaven upon his view; and the principal, central, attractive object in that scene of vision was the remarkable personage spoken of in our text:—"And he had in his right hand seven stars." Let us endeavor to call our minds away from the poor, paltry, perishing objects

of earth, and notice for a while the wonderful Being here presented to our view. Who is this glorious Being referred to in our text and described in the context? "Who is this King of Glory?" He is said to be "One like unto the son of man." He is a person in human form, with some resemblance to that humble Nazarene, that meek and lowly teacher, that patient sufferer, that man of sorrows whom John had seen and heard and followed and loved, who died on the Cross praying for his murderers, and departed from earth blessing his followers. The Apostle perceived him in this vision, in human form, with some resemblance of His former appearance; but now in such resplendent glory that He seems another person. He is, however, the very same Being that John had seen before. But then He was in His state of humiliation; now He is in His state of exaltation: then He suffered, now He reigns: then He was crucified, now He is glorified. Let angels and men admire Him now! Let heaven and earth rejoice in His merited promotion! Let us view Him, as we may, in the reflected light of John's bright vision. He appeared "in the midst of seven golden candlesticks," which represented the Seven Asian Churches. And they may have been intended to represent all Christian Churches in all other lands and in all succeeding ages; for true Christians everywhere are the "jewels of the Lord" and the "light of the world," and they are far more precious in the sight of the Lord than fine gold can be in the estimation of men. And the presence of the Lord is in the midst of all the Christian Churches; for the Saviour Himself has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" and the

Lord hath said of Zion, "This is my rest, for I have desired it; here will I dwell for ever." Well might an inspired writer exclaim, "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One in the midst of thee!" Hence the Lord is in the midst of Zion. Here, in the Christian Church, the divine and special presence of the Lord continually abides. Here, the light of His Word always shines. Here, the flame of His love forever burns. This glorious Being appeared "clothed in a garment down to his feet, and girt around his breast with a golden girdle." He appeared in a princely and a priestly robe, representing His royal priesthood, or His kingly and priestly offices, which He sustains and executes as Redeemer, in His state of exaltation. In Him is this prophecy now fulfilled, "He shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne." He doth sit and rule upon His throne, for He is a King. He was indeed born a King. And a few wise men, attracted and guided by His natal star, came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" And when they found the young child, Jesus, they fell down and worshipped Him — worshipped Christ, the new-born King. But the world knew Him not. "His own received him not." "The heathen raged, and the people imagined a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed." The Jews rejected, condemned, and crucified their King. Yet the Most High has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion; and not the counsels of the rulers, nor the commands of the kings, nor the rage of the people, can revoke His righteous, firm, declared decree, for it is the result

of the counsels of Divine wisdom and the determination of Divine will. Once a crown of piercing thorns pressed the bleeding brow of this peculiar King, whom men condemned and God approved, whom earth rejected and heaven received; but now there is a different wreath around His glory-beaming brow. "And on his head a golden crown." This was the ensign of His super-eminent authority and regal power. Once Pilate wrote His accusation and put it on His Cross over His head, where the names and crimes of crucified criminals were placed, And His accusation was, "*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*" And it was written in Hebrew. Greek, and Latin. But now, Divine inspiration has written His inscription, not on His Cross (where the names and crimes of crucified criminals were placed), but "on his vesture and on his thigh," where conquerors wear their swords. And this inscription now is, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." And it is written in the characters of revelation's living light. And it shall be flashed in the light of every language through all this dark rebellious world. And it shall be echoed in the voice of every tongue, down the track of ages, until time shall end. And wherever this title of the heavenly Monarch is seen or heard, it carries a warning with it to all people, and rulers, and kings of the earth, to submit to this omnipotent, all-conquering King; or they must fall by the stroke of His wrath. For He is set at God's right hand, and His foes shall be made His footstool. "His throne is in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." And His providence and power are seen and felt, and shall be owned in the history of nations, in the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms, in the progress and prosperity, and in the declension and wreck of

mighty empires. And His kingdom shall stand forever. How pleasing is the thought, and how precious is the truth, that this "King of Glory" is our great High Priest! And as such, He atoned for us on earth, and He intercedes for us in heaven. "He appeared once, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." And now He liveth to make intercession for us. "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement." And we hold fast our profession, because "we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens." And this Royal Priest is "girded" with strength and with love, to do the work of a Redeemer.

> "Girt with omnipotence and grace,
> And glory decks the Saviour's face."

He is the Lord, mighty to save. This Lord is our Saviour! This King is our Sacrifice! In Him we see the power and the majesty of the King blended with the sacredness and tenderness of the Priest. Here Infinite Majesty is merged in Infinite Mercy. Here Omnipotence seems melted and moulded into Love. Verily, "God is love." And the brightest exhibition of the Divine love to us is the gift, atonement, and intercession of Christ, who is the Head of the Church, the universal King, and the great High Priest. Every part of the description here given of Him tells of His greatness and shows us His glory. It is said, "His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow." This may signify His spotless purity, His perfect righteousness, His antiquity and glory. For He is "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." And He is a righteous King — He loveth righteousness — a sceptre of

righteousness is the sceptre of His kingdom. He reigns in righteousness and He will judge the world in righteousness. And He is the "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." "His goings forth were from of old, even from everlasting"—from the days of eternity. And He is crowned with glory and honor.

It is said of this glorious Being, "His eyes were as a flame of fire." This denotes His omniscience, which pierces through all darkness, pervades all space, penetrates all hearts, perceives all thoughts, observes all things, and witnesses all events. For "The eyes of the Lord are in every place," and "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." It is also said of our Lord, as He appeared in this scene of vision, "His feet were like unto fine brass," denoting the stability of His purposes and appointments, and the excellency of His proceedings in all His works and ways of grace, providence, and judgment. As brass was considered a very strong and durable metal, it was used for making weapons and gates and walls, which men intended should be strong and irresistible and last forever. So the appearance of our Saviour's feet, being like fine brass, may be intended to indicate and remind us of His strength and steadfastness to support His interests and to defend His people, and to subdue and crush His enemies. He has proclaimed Himself "the Almighty, and he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And His omnipotence and immutability are stronger and more lasting than the gates and walls of brass. And those attributes of His are the strong and impregnable walls of salvation around His people; and those are the eternal rocks upon which His rebellious foes are wrecked.

"These attributes shall firm abide
Our everlasting trust,
When gems and monuments and crowns
Are mouldered down to dust."

"And His voice was as the sound of many waters." This may represent the energy of His word, its efficacy to awaken, convert, and save. His word shall be heard by them that are afar off; and it shall be the power of God unto salvation to *all* them that believe. And "the hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." "And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." This represents His awful and irresistible justice, which will cut down His enemies on every side; for prophecy declares, "The Lord shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and shall slay the wicked with the breath of his lips." "And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." This represented the radiation of His glory. But His glory is too great for man to describe, too bright for us now to behold. We love to view the reflection of His glory in the scenes of apocalyptic vision. But oh, we long to be like Him, to see Him as He is, to love Him as we ought, to be "forever with the Lord!"

In noticing the description given of the wonderful Being spoken of in the text, we cannot but be impressed with the wonderful truth, that this "Son of Man" is "the Son of God." In Him there is a wonderful combination of natures. The Godhead and the manhood, the human and the Divine, are associated in this one mysterious Person. Consequently, He can sympathise with man, and He can mediate with God. He is God manifest in the flesh. He can with the right hand of His divinity lay hold on the

eternal throne, and with the left hand of His humanity He can grasp and embrace a sinking world. And by an exertion of His arms, nerved with omnipotence, He can bring heaven and earth together, draw God and man into reconciliation. "For he is our peace," the author, centre, and substance of reconciliation. And to this great "Prince of Peace" unceasing glory shall be ascribed :

"For ever be His name adored,
His love for ever blessed."

"Hail! Prince of Peace, forever hail,
Redeemer, Brother, Friend;
Though earth, and time, and life shall fail,
Thy praise shall never end."

Having seen a gleam of the reflected glory of the "Sun of Righteousness," let us now notice the "stars" spoken of in our text. "And he had in his right hand seven stars." Those stars are interpreted, by the Saviour Himself, as representing "the angels of the churches." Those angels of the churches are evidently the pastors of the churches, the ministers of the Gospel. Here we may see the sacred and responsible office and work with which ministers of the Gospel are entrusted. They are called "angels." The word means messengers. This name is applied to the created "sons of God," "the mŏrning stars," "the heavenly hosts" that sang together and shouted for joy when creation's work was done, celebrating Divine wisdom and power in the highest strains. Those angels of heaven are God's messengers, inasmuch as He sends them to execute His orders of providence, to encamp around and guard His saints, to minister unto the heirs of salvation, to convey the pious poor from earth's afflictions to Abraham's bosom. Ministers of the

Gospel are also called "angels," for they too are God's messengers. He sends them to carry on His purposes of grace, to spread and perpetuate His Word, to minister unto and edify His Church, to comfort His people, to turn men from darkness unto light, to watch over souls as they that must give an account. The Gospel of the grace of God is the message with which Christ's ministers are charged. This is God's great message of mercy to the miserable, of reconciliation to the rebellious, of salvation to a world of sinners lost. The Lord sends His ministering servants to proclaim this message. He says to them, with Divine authority, "Go, preach my Gospel: I have sent you." This commission echoes in the element of their conscience by day and by night, in society and in solitude, in company and alone. The conviction is impressed upon their minds which was expressed by the Apostle: "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." The man thus called and sent of God may at first tremble, hesitate, object: "I cannot go, I cannot speak." "Who is sufficient for these things?" But the Divine Sovereign is immutable. The commission still echoes in the conscience, the conviction still abides in the mind, deep and indelible. "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." The subject bows submissive to the Sovereign, and prays for guidance and for grace. The Supreme Sovereign stoops to hear him pray, and deigns to say, "I am with you," "My grace is sufficient for you." This is enough. His faith grasps the precious promise. His trembling mind now clings to God in humble trust. With a subdued will and a consecrated heart he offers himself and his best services to God, say-

ing, "Here am I, send me;" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" For the sake of Christ and the Gospel he forsakes all. He leaves his dearest earthly friends, the home of his affections, and goes forth into the world "a messenger of God," an ambassador of Christ, an "angel of the Church." As God's messenger he goes submissively wherever God in His providence sends him; whether to the east or west, or north or south. He goes to the mountains or valleys, plains or deserts, cities or hamlets; his best Friend is present with him everywhere. He goes to the rich and poor, high and low, refined and rude, friends and foes, saints and sinners; for his message from God is for *all* classes and for *all* characters, and he, as God's messenger, *must* proclaim it to *all*. He is the pastor of the Church which the Redeemer bought with His most precious blood, and there is no lamb in all the flock he dare disdain to feed, and there is no foe before whose face he should fear his Master's cause to plead. Wheresoever he goes, and before whomsoever he stands, he must proclaim the Gospel message — nothing more than this, nothing less than this, nothing contrary to this. As God's messenger he must be true to God, true to the cause of Christ, true to his important trust. If he should prove a traitor to his high and holy trust, he might reasonably apprehend the fearful doom of fallen angels. He would justly deserve —

> "The everlasting flame,
> For rebel angels first prepared,
> Where mercy never came."

If the messenger of God would be true to his trust and faithful in his work, he must be courageous and firm. By whatever hostile influences he may

be surrounded, with whatever kind of opposition he may meet, whatever degree of suffering he may endure, he must maintain the spirit of true moral heroism, and be ready to say in the language of the brave Apostle, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." Because the minister of the Gospel is the "angel of the Church," *i. e.* the "messenger" of God, therefore it matters not where he may be, or in whose presence he may stand, or what difficulties he may encounter, the Gospel must be his message, Christ his subject, redemption his theme. As God's messenger he may be eloquent, but he should be earnest, and he must be faithful. Let us now proceed to notice that those "angels of the churches," or messengers of God, or ministers of the Gospel, are represented in our text by the symbol of "stars." There are certain points of analogy which may justify this metaphorical representation. It is said in the Bible, "God made the stars and set them in the firmament of heaven to give light on the earth." Hence we learn that those stars of heaven, whatever may be their number, or nature, or motion, or magnitude, or density, or distance, are all God's creatures and men's servants. So with ministers of the Gospel. They are God's creatures as men and as ministers. God gave them their being, and he gave them their physical, mental, moral, and spiritual qualifications for the work of the ministry. He called them by the motions of His spirit and by the indications of His providence to the high, holy and conspicuous office which they fill. It was God's gracious and almighty hand that set

those living lights as stars in the moral and ecclesiastical firmament. It is "by the grace of God they are what they are," and where they are. And God has made them what they are, and placed them where they are, to be the servants of man "for Jesus' sake." God gave them their being and their position that they might live and labor, teach and shine, for the promotion of the spiritual and eternal welfare of mankind; and the more exalted their station, the more brilliant their talents, the more extensive the sphere of their influence, the more service will they be required and expected to render unto mankind as their servants for Jesus' sake.

The stars are placed in every part of the firmament to shed their light upon every part of the earth. They shine with their lovely lustre in the east and west and north and south. They sparkle and shed their sweet influence from the depth of the horizon all around to the high dome of the zenith above. Their light is for every land and for all mankind. So with the ministers of the Gospel. By Divine appointment they are shedding the lovely lustre of Gospel light in every land, in every latitude and longitude; in the bleak regions of the North and in the sunny climes of the South, in the ancient cities and palmy plains of the East and in the growing hamlets and wide-spread prairies of the West. Thanks be to God, the light of the Gospel is not sectional; but, like the light of the sun, moon and stars, it is for "all the world, for every creature." It shines in the halls of the rich and in the hovels of the poor; it illuminates and comforts the inhabitants of palaces and cottages. This heavenly Gospel-light is designed to spread over all lands, to enter all homes, to gladden all hearts, to enlighten all minds, to save all men, except

those who will continue to love darkness rather than light. This blessed Gospel, direct from heaven, clothed with the glory of God, and fired with a soul of celestial love, is going forth in its world-wide career. The fruit of its lips is "Peace — peace to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh." It sings as it goes the same sweet song that the angelic choir sang when Christ was born: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!" It proclaims this wondrous truth, which angels stand amazed to hear and men exult to know: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It utters the world-wide call: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" "Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" "Whosoever will, may come and take of the water of life freely." O thou angel of light, "having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth," speed thy flight on thy mission of mercy, to enlighten, bless and save "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

The use of the stars, to the inhabitants of the earth, is to give a degree of light, during the night, which aids and guides travellers on their way. So with ministers of the Gospel. They are called to their office and work for the purpose of communicating light to the minds of men, to aid and guide them on the way of duty and safety; and their usefulness consists in doing this; and the more successful they are in doing this, the more useful they are. The pilgrims of earth, journeying through this sin-darkened world, always find the faithful ministers of the Gospel ready and willing to shed light upon their minds

and upon their pathway, to guide them through the night of time to their heavenly home where there is no night. The mariners of time, upon the sea of life, exposed to temptation's winds and tossed by passion's restless waves, always find the faithful ministers of the Gospel as beacon-lights to warn them of the dangerous shoals and rocks on which immortal souls are wrecked, and as polar stars to guide them to the peaceful "shining shore" where winds and waves distress no more.

The stars shine in a borrowed light. That which they shed down upon us is only a reflection of what they receive from the sun. So with faithful ministers of the Gospel. The light which they communicate they do not possess originally, innately, independently; but it is a reflection of what they receive from Him who came "a light unto the world, that men might not abide in darkness, but have the light of life."

Ministers of the Gospel shine in a glory not their own, but borrowed from Him whose glory they are commissioned to reflect. The servants must be filled with and reflect the light of the Saviour. The laborers must be lost in the splendor of their Lord. Ministers must manifest the spirit of Christ, and echo His teachings and reflect His glory. They are not to preach themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, who is the "light of the world," "the Sun of righteousness." They are to preach Christ in the dignity of His person, in the glory of His character, in the condescension of His grace, in the wonders of His love, in the efficacy of His sufferings, in the prevalency of His intercession, in His ability to save to the uttermost. Christ must be preached as the only foundation of the sinner's hope, and the righteousness and strength of every saint.

Let us now notice the peculiar position of those stars spoken of in our text, representing the ministers of Christ. They are here said to be "in his right hand." This teaches us that Christ's ministers are employed and used by Him as instruments to accomplish His own purposes. They are not the authors, but only the instruments of good: "All the good that is done in earth, the Lord doeth it." His most successful servants are only instruments used by His Almighty hand; and hence they should be very humble. Though they may be skilled in science, gifted with eloquence, honored by men, high in communion with God, and successful in their efforts, yet they must bear their honors meekly, and bring all the fruitage of their attainments and all the success of their efforts, with humble spirits, to the Redeemer's feet, saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory."

The peculiar position of the ministers of Christ also teaches us their safety. While the Lord holds them in His right hand, they are secure. The right hand of the Lord is spoken of figuratively to denote the power of the Lord. And His power is pledged and employed for the protection, security and salvation of His faithful servants. If they were left to themselves they would soon fall before their foes, or blindly rush to ruin, or madly haste to hell. But here — and only here — is their safety and their hope of salvation; they are upheld, and led, and protected by the Hand Divine.

My brethren in the ministry, we should frequently consider the offices and attributes of our Redeemer, the greatness and the glory of the Lord, whose we are and whom we serve. And we should seriously consider our office under Him, our work for Him,

and our peculiar position with Him. And in consideration of what He is, and the relation we sustain to Him, we should be impressed with solemnity, inspired with zeal and stimulated to ministerial fidelity. There are many and strong motives to urge us to be faithful ministers of the Gospel. And by those motives we should be impelled to proceed in our work cheerfully, patiently, and courageously. Our office and position call and encourage us to teach and preach, to spend and be spent, to serve and suffer (and if need be to die) for the cause of Christ, and the glory of God, and the purity and prosperity of the Church, and the salvation of souls. To preach the Gospel is our work, our one work, to which everything else should be subordinated. This is our great work, which demands and is worthy of the exertion of all our powers. To this great work we have been divinely called. God's Spirit has moved us, His grace has inclined us, His Word has enlightened us, His Church has ordained and commissioned us, His "love constrains us," His providence opens our way, and His blessing crowns our work. Though in the work of the ministry we may "both labor and suffer," yet we have cause to thank God for the privilege of laboring in such a work and suffering in such a cause. This labor is rest, this pain is pleasure; such suffering is blessed because we are laboring and suffering for our loving Lord, to whom we owe a debt of love we never can repay. Though we may be surrounded by dangers, opposed by enemies, and oppressed by the weight of our responsibility, yet we are protected and supported. "The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Thank God, we have a good refuge and a sure support. Though our

work may be difficult and arduous, yet we are not left to perform our work cheerless and alone —"The Lord is our light and our salvation." His precious promise extends and applies to us and to all His servants in every age and land: "Lo! I am with you *always*." Though we may be "tried" and "have tribulation" for a few days, yet we are not left comfortless nor hopeless; for the Lord, the righteous Judge, from the throne of His glory, is saying to us in our toils and trials and services and sufferings, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." O my brethren in the ministry, fellow-servants of Jesus Christ by the will of God, let us strive by the grace of God to "be faithful" — faithful ministers of the New Testament — faithful unto death. While God permits, let us continue to preach the Gospel; and let us do it with an earnestness which shall never tire, with a holy zeal which shall never abate, with a glowing fervor which shall never wane, until the silence of death shall settle on our lips. The design of our efforts in the work of the ministry is to act in concert with Heaven's appointed plan to spread the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, to bring back our revolted and rebellious world to its allegiance to God, to save immortal souls from endless death, and to spread and perpetuate the noble principles of the Church we love — principles of justice and righteousness which shall live for ever. Surely the object of our efforts is worthy of the most fervent zeal that ever fired the soul of man. And though the effects of our efforts may fall far short of our wishes, and they may not be fully seen or known or appreciated on earth and in time, yet the effects of faithful efforts for God and for His cause are not lost, and they cannot die;

they shall live and last and rise as high as the throne of God, and they shall reach as far as eternity shall extend. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Then let us labor on and press forward. And as we continue in our great work and advance towards our future reward, let us earnestly pray that all our efforts may partake of a heavenly inspiration, such a heavenly inspiration as shall be the preparatory vibrations of the harps upon which we are to sound the high notes of redemption above. Our chief Gospel theme on earth — redemption — will be our immortal song in heaven. Redemption — redemption for ever!

God grant that in our day and in our work we may be "shining and burning lights," wise to win souls to Christ, and instrumental in turning many to righteousness. And when the shadow of death shall eclipse our light on earth, then in the kingdom of glory, where death's dark shadow can never extend, may we "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever." Amen.

The Lord's Supper.

A SERMON.

By Rev. Augustus Webster, D. D.

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."—Matt. xxvi: 26-28.

The Lord's Supper is a solemn commemorative ceremony instituted by our Saviour, and designed to keep us in remembrance of His atoning death; not to reproach us for it, but to animate us with gratitude and hope, that we might be encouraged to strive earnestly and successfully to secure the great salvation which He died to provide for us, miserable sinners.

Some have wandered into very gross and superstitious views of this instructive ordinance. Others have been forced away from it by the perversion of its tender sacredness into an unapproachable awe. Error has made a "burning bush" of it, and commanded the trembling people to loose the shoes from their feet. It has even made it a Sinai, enveloping it in clouds from which lightnings have flashed in fiery indignation, while, in voice of thundering, all save Moses have been forbidden to come up. Satan turned Eden itself into a curse, and from that dread epoch has continued the same artifice in refer-

ence to all the blessings of redeeming grace. The very serpent, that was lifted up in the wilderness to rescue an erring people from destruction, he, in after years, transmuted into an idol for the ruin of that people's posterity.

But to the Supper. Seated around that table, in the humble "guest-chamber" of a plain citizen, where they had been eating the Passover, and from which Judas had just retired to consummate his treachery, were our Lord and the remaining eleven of His apostles. All were very grave and sad, for He had announced that one of the twelve would betray Him, and that He was about to be put to death. A cruel hierarchy, which had arrived at that summit of pride, arrogance, and superstition toward which all hierarchies in this world ever steadily and surely progress, had determined upon His death; and Judas had gone to betray Him into their hands.

Fifteen centuries before, Jesus, as Jehovah, had commanded the ancestors of those hierarchs to institute that Passover in which the nation was then engaged. A lamb without blemish was to be killed, its blood to be sprinkled on the door of each house, and the flesh to be eaten. Every family that obeyed the terms of that covenant was delivered from the destroying angel and led safely out of Egypt. A similar feast was to be observed annually in commemoration of that deliverance. But now the Lamb of God, that had been prefigured by the paschal lamb, had come to deliver all the families of the earth; and at that very Feast of the Passover, the hierarchy, blinded by their traditions, which had "made" (as they ever do) "the Word of God to be of no effect," formally rejected and slew Him.

Subdued by sorrow, there they sat, those few chosen men, so imperfect in their faith and so frail in their piety, as was too soon to be exemplified in their cowardice and in their desertion of that kind and gracious Lord. They were the first persons to whom the Supper was ever administered, and the only persons who ever received it from the hands of its adorable Founder. Facts, these, that are full of significance; facts never to be left out of view when we meditate upon the personal qualifications necessary to a proper participation of the ordinance.

Those qualifications cannot be very high if it be sufficient to equal those of the first partakers, and to whom our Lord Himself administered the rite. What did they know of the plan of salvation? As to some of its details, it was a subject of dispute among them for perhaps near twenty years succeeding that memorable night. What was the condition of their faith? So dim that Peter drew a sword to resist those who came to fulfil his Master's predictions; so weak that they gave up all for lost at His arrest, one of them swearing that he was not one of His followers, and two of them uttering their despair and renunciation of His claims to the Messiahship by telling Him that they "had hoped it had been he who would have redeemed Israel."

It is the rule that religious ordinances, rites, ceremonies, &c., are in their purest, best condition at their origin. Afterwards they degenerate and need reform. Thus, when Paul introduced the Supper at Corinth, we have his own testimony for it that he ordered it aright. Afterward, the manner of its celebration had so degenerated that he could no longer approve, and he wrote to reform it. How

then are we to demand, in this late age, that the doctrinal and moral qualifications for a proper participation of the Supper must be great, with our eyes fixed upon the scene of its primitive institution, the meagre doctrinal and moral qualifications of its first participants, and the controlling fact that our Lord Himself, the very founder of it, was the administrator? Should it not be enough for that purpose that the present participators be like their prototypes, since it is enough that the present administrator be like his Lord? He instituted it to be the memorial of His atonement, and He administered it to those who professed to receive Him as the Messiah, but whose conceptions of Him were very imperfect, whose religious character was in its incipiency, whose interest in Christ was so little that it could not keep the chosen three awake while He suffered so dreadfully in the garden, and whose constancy was such a vanity that at His arrest "they all forsook him and fled."

These remarks are not intended to encourage ignorance and a low degree of Christian morality, but to bring into view Scriptural and instructive facts; to aid to a better understanding of the Supper, and a more profitable use of that wise, efficient, though simple and ever blessed ordinance, an ordinance not constituted of the body, soul, and divinity of our Lord, nor yet of mere bread and wine, but of bread and wine to be received in remembrance of Jesus, the Saviour of sinners; a sign and a seal of the new and everlasting covenant with the new Israel of believers in the Lamb of God, at the sight of whose sprinkled blood the destroying angel will reverently bow his head and *pass over*, wondering at the grace of Him who can be "just even as the justifier of the ungodly that believeth in Jesus."

"Jesus took bread," the bread which had been placed on the table for the Passover. Not a wafer; not in any way extraordinary, save that it was unleavened. No mystery about it. There could not have been a more simple or a more intelligible act. It is not affirmed that there is no mystery in Christianity. There are depths in it that no created mind can fathom, vasts, which no created mind can explore. But, it is affirmed, that there is no mystery in the nature and design of the elements of the Lord's Supper: and that its efficiency depends upon God's blessing our correct understanding and use of it. Mysteries to it are what clouds are to the sun: men see the clouds only, the sun is obscured.

"And blessed." Not the bread, but God. The Apostle (1 Cor. xi: 23, 24) explains this "blessing" by the words, "And when he had *given thanks*." It was, in fact, a pious custom with the Jews, as it is with us, to thank God for His goodness and bounty at their meals, exclaiming, "Blessed be the Lord our God, the Lord of the world," &c. (Vide *Buxtorf's Syn. Iud.*) Could anything be more foreign from fact and truth than to pervert this pious act into a type and warrant of transubstantiation: or, of a consecration of the elements of the Supper: except in the sense in which our daily meals are consecrated by our eucharistic prayer? — especially when we have Paul's clear and definite explanation of it, in an ample statement, written expressly to correct an erroneous understanding and use of the ordinance. The Scripture does not say that our Lord blessed the bread. In the phrase of the text, "and blesssed it," the word *it* is an interpolation, and is improperly substituted for the word *God*. Paul affirms that

that "blessing" was, "giving thanks." Such was the manner of opening the ceremony of the Passover. In fact, there is no argument whatever, in view of the Scriptural statements, to maintain the hypothesis of transubstantiation, or any mystic consecration of the bread; but both Scripture and facts demonstrate the giving of thanks.

"And brake it, and gave it to his disciples:" Still further testimony against the use of any wafer, or mysteriously prepared element, on that occasion. Our Lord took the loaf, or cake of unleavened bread, just as they had been using it in the Passover celebration; and, having given thanks to God, He "brake it, and gave it to his disciples." Not even the slightest hint that He changed the nature of the bread. Nothing of the kind is to be seen, so far, in this memorable transaction. We are looking at the facts; and in not one of these, as yet, have we seen any intimation of either transubstantiation or consecration; except so far as that Scriptural precept will apply which teaches that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." (1 Tim. iv: 4, 5.)

And said, "Take, eat: this is my body." Here, it is said, is the fact demonstrating that a change had been wrought in the nature of the bread. Let us see. The meaning of a phrase depends very much upon *emphasis.* Any one may see the difference of meaning that would be made in these four words by changing the emphasis from one to another of them; thus: "*This* is my body;" "This *is* my body;" "This is *my* body;" "This is my *body.*" In each case the meaning varies from that of the other three. Then, by what authority does any one place the em-

phasis on the word body; thus making our Lord to give some show of support to the doctrine of transubstantiation?—though even then His language would have been figurative, indicating nothing stronger than when He declared Himself *a door*, *a vine*, *a shepherd*, &c. But the emphasis should be placed on *this* and *my*, making the phrase to read "*This* is *my* body," for very evident reasons. What they had been eating in the Passover ceremony is well known. The lamb that had been slain in Egypt was represented by the body of the lamb of which they had just eaten; the wine represented the blood of the paschal lamb; the bitter herbs, the bitterness of their bondage; the unleavened bread, the haste in which they had been hurried out from the land of their sufferings. All those things were represented to keep the Jews in perpetual remembrance of that great deliverance. So now, when our Lord was about to substitute for those, the memorials of a greater deliverance, accomplished by His death, for the many, the nations of the Gentiles as well as that of the Jews, He took the bread, and said, "*This* is *my* body": that is, "This *bread*, and not *a lamb*, is in all future time to represent *my* body, to be slain for all the families of the earth."

Can any one deny, with any show of reason, that this is the natural, easy, proper rendering of our Lord's words? In the paschal supper the paschal lamb's body and blood were represented. In the Lord's Supper our Lord's body and blood are represented. No one has ever supposed that the representative, commemorative lamb was the original lamb slain in Egypt; and why should the representative, commemorative bread be the body of our Saviour slain upon the cross? The circumstances

require us to understand our Lord to have meant, "As the flesh we have just eaten signifies and calls to remembrance the ancient Passover lamb, slain for the family of Israel; so this bread shall signify and call to remembrance *my* body, slain for 'all the families of the earth.'" This is plain enough. And yet, while men acknowledge that when Jesus said "I am the door," "I am the vine," "I am the good shepherd," &c., He spoke figuratively, they contend that He necessarily spoke literally when He said "This is *my* body;" and, therefore, the fragment of bread which He gave to each apostle was actually His own body, and that a priest, by using the same words, can do the same thing.

Those who hold this unscriptural view, hold, also, that the benefit derived from eating our Lord is similar to that from eating our natural food; that is, by feeding on certain articles we partake of their nature; and by feeding on the Lord, in this sense of transubstantiation, we partake of the Divine nature; and so, as none but a properly authenticated priest can transubstantiate, we cannot partake of the Divine nature without the aid of such priest; and, therefore, without him we cannot be saved.

But the Apostle, in his clear and inspired exposition of this point (1 Cor. xi: 24), informs us that the benefit to be derived from eating the bread is by "remembering" Jesus: "*this* do in remembrance of me: τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν: this do *unto* the *remembrance* of *me*: unto that end, for that purpose: as you have hitherto eaten lamb's flesh, to keep in memory the lamb slain in Egypt, and the connected deliverance of Israel; henceforth eat this bread, to keep in memory *me*, slain upon the cross, and the connected salvation of the believers of all nations.

No historical fact can be clearer, than, that the Lord's Supper is a modification of the Passover: and the historical relations of any institution must, of necessity ,influence our apprehension of it. They are the rays of the sun that enable us to see a monument that would otherwise be shrouded in such midnight darkness that, even with the torch of tradition in our hand, we could see but very imperfectly and with but little satisfaction. Had not our Lord and His apostles been eating the body of the paschal lamb? What significance then could there have been in placing the emphasis on the word *body?* To have said this is my *body*, could have been no antithesis to the body of the paschal lamb; yet the nature of the case demanded an antithesis between the representative flesh they had been eating, and the representative bread they were thenceforth to eat; and that could only be by placing the emphasis on the pronoun *my:* "This (bread) is *my* body," *i. e.*, this bread shall henceforth represent *my* body, as the memorial we have been eating has heretofore represented the body of the paschal lamb. Therefore the reading, "This is my *body*," must be given up as unhistorical, unmeaning, untrue, unprofitable: and we must recall, what was evidently the primitive meaning, the emphasis to its proper position on the pronoun. "This is *my* body" is the historical, natural, true reading, and most profitable instruction. We are not in the modified, Christianised Passover, to use any representative of the body of the paschal lamb, that was slain in the old covenant, whose narrower provisions encircled only the children of Abraham; but we are to use a representative, a remembrancer of the body of the Lamb of God, that was slain in

the new covenant, whose wider provisions encircle all the nations of the earth, inasmuch as they all were to be blessed in the seed of Abraham, Christ.

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them." St. Paul, in the passage already referred to (1 Cor. xi.), says, "After the same manner also (he took) the cup," &c., which is in further confirmation that the phrases, "he blessed" and "he gave thanks," have in this case, the same meaning.

"Saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." It is unnecessary to repeat the argument as to the impropriety and absurdity of supposing that the wine in the cup had been transubstantiated into the blood of Jesus. The blood of the first paschal lamb had been shed for the deliverance of Israel, family by family, from the destroying angel and from the bondage of Egypt. That was the old covenant, in the blood of the lamb. But the blood of Jesus was to be shed for the deliverance of all the families of the earth (Gen. xxii: 18) from the bondage of sin.

Therefore, the cup, or wine, from that time should be used to remind Christians of the new covenant, in the blood of Christ; and as in the case of the bread, the manner in which the wine was to benefit them was by bringing the Saviour to their remembrance.

The Jews had used the cup as a remembrancer of the blood of the paschal lamb. Our Lord displaced that remembrancer, and substituted one that should call to mind His own blood: then, handing it to those believers in Him, the true Lamb, he said, "Drink ye all of it." Let the Jews, if they will, drink of the old cup, in the old remembrance; but ye are be-

lievers in a new covenant, and must henceforth drink of a new cup. For while, under the old covenant, the sprinkled blood of the paschal lamb was shed for one nation, Israel, for their deliverance from the bonds of Pharoah; under the new covenant, My blood is to be shed for the many nations, Gentiles and Jews, for their deliverance from the bonds of Satan, which are sin. And if the ancient memorial of pity and salvation for one people was kept up from age to age, until now, the close of that dispensation, let this memorial of pity and salvation for all the miserable race of Adam, be preserved from generation to generation, until this final dispensation shall close, and the heavens and earth pass away, at My return, accompanied by the heavenly hosts, to arraign the nations at My bar, and vindicate the purity, goodness, wisdom, and power of My throne.

At the first celebration of the Supper, after the death of Jesus, how humiliating must have been their remembrance of Him! They had all forsaken Him and fled. With what feelings of self-abasement and remorse must they have called to mind the scenes of the institution of the Supper; their own mistaken self-confidence; the lonely anguish of Jesus in the garden; His seizure; their own base flight; with all the sequent sufferings of their Lord!

And with what wonder and gratitude must they have remembered how Jesus, like a kind shepherd, had pursued after and collected His scattered sheep, reanimating them by His presence, and bringing them back again into His fold! Great indeed was His grace that He had not spurned them from His compassion, but had actually restored them to His favor, and continued them in the high office of the Apostolate.

O the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! He breaks not the bruised reed! Not the righteous did He come to call, but sinners, lost sinners; and from this tender memorial of His sufferings and death, what a gracious voice comes forth, inviting all that "labor and are heavy laden to look to him for rest!"

The Lord's Supper is a memorial, a monument, and attests the history of His death who "loved us and gave himself for us." It is celebrated this day among us, of this generation; but we did not originate it. Who did? Let that question be fairly answered, and it must be in such terms as those of St. Paul, "The Lord Jesus, the night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake, and said, Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you: this do for a remembrance of me. After the same manner also, the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. xi: 23, 25.) It is impossible to give any other fair and true answer; for any hypothesis of invention, collusion, imposition, here, is utterly absurd.

And as to what we do when we partake of the elements, the bread and the wine, the Apostle is sufficiently explicit: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (1 Cor. xi: 26.) Thus we are to perpetuate the memorial. Thus are we to remind ourselves and the perishing world around us, of the Saviour once crucified, but now risen, interceding and able to save all who come unto God by Him. We are to eat this bread and drink this wine, that is, the bread and wine of the Supper, to show forth the Lord's death. The elements remain bread

and wine; they are such to the eye, they are such to the palate, and as such does the Apostle describe them.

When the water was changed by our Lord into wine, the human senses could perceive the change. When the withered hand was made whole, the fact was visible. So with all the miracles. They were attested by the human senses. So with the elements of the Supper. The senses can attest all the change that has passed upon them. What change do they attest? None. What (substantial) change do the Scriptures affirm concerning them? None. In fact, St. Paul states distinctly that it is by eating bread, drinking wine, that we are to accomplish the Master's will; and were we to eat flesh and drink blood, it would not comply with the Divine requirements.

Some Christians do hold, as we are aware, and as we have already mentioned, that our Lord meant that the bread was really His body and that the wine was really His blood; and that their priests have the power to accomplish the same mysterious change. Yet, all who receive the bread from the hands of those priests can perceive no change whatever: while the priests, who alone drink the wine, know that it is but wine in color, taste, odor, everything: and chemistry would bear the same testimony. The priest, no doubt, has power to accomplish all the change of substance that our Lord effected; but that, as is evident from Scripture, was none at all. He gave a new significance to the bread and to the wine, in conformity to the new memorial which He instituted: nothing more. And this simple, intelligible, beautiful, instructive, tender, blessed ordinance men would pervert into a mere mystery of superstition. Alas!

We prefer to listen to the voice of our Saviour, as it is to be heard from the inspired page; and we approach the Supper as the holy memorial of our Lord's death, listening with the ear of faith to its encouraging, refreshing, saving utterances, as we find written upon it, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That is our creed. That is our hope. That is our joy. With such a creed, such a hope, such a joy, we take our place humbly and thankfully at the sacred feast, and are satisfied. Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us. He was raised for our justification; He ever liveth to make intercession for us. The soul feeds on truth, not on flesh and blood; and the truth, the truth as it is in Jesus; the truth that "While we were yet enemies Christ died for us," that is the delicious, nourishing food distributed to us by our loving Master at this memorial feast.

Laborers together with God:

A SERMON, PREACHED BEFORE THE MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE, IN GEORGETOWN, D. C., MARCH, 1869.

By Rev. J. Thomas Murray.

"We are laborers together with God."—1 Cor., iii: 9.

The Church at Corinth was made up of mixed elements: persons of different nationalities, differing in their mental training and moral susceptibilities, and in their tastes and habits. There were Greeks, Romans, and Jews. From these mixed elements arose faction and party spirit. The peculiar manifestation of this party spirit was minister-worship; the members of the Church being "puffed up for one against another." One boasted of Paul, another of Apollos, and another of Cephas. One party admired Paul's manner of teaching the truth, and another preferred that of Apollos. Paul taught in a different manner from Apollos, though there was no difference in the substance of their teaching. "The eloquence of Paul was rough and burning; it stirred men's hearts, kindling in them the living fire of truth; that of Apollos was more refined and polished": so, different persons would be impressed by the truth as proclaimed by each preacher, according to their peculiar tastes and susceptibilities; and they would naturally become attached to the minister by whom they were brought to Christ.

All this was well enough so long as they did not exalt the teacher above the subject of his teaching and lose sight of the cause in admiration of the champion. But these Corinthians let their feelings go so far, that while they exalted their particular favorite they looked with contempt upon others, and created strife and division in the Church. To correct this evil, this letter was written to them by the Apostle Paul. He tells them that in ascribing to one minister more honor than to another, in such a way as to become wrangling partisans, they were much to blame; for none of their teachers were masters: only One is Master, even Christ, and all others, whether teachers or learners, are brethren. Furthermore, that the apostles were only instruments used for the conversion of men: the efficient power in their conversion is of God. Paul is employed to plant and Apollos to water; and neither planting nor watering is anything of itself: it is not Paul nor Apollos, but God who giveth the increase. But, though ministers are but instruments, and have different parts assigned them, they are all one in respect of the end for which they labor: they are "laborers together with God."

We are here taught the unity in diversity of the cause of Christ. It includes many parts and engages many persons, with a variety of talent, but all working in harmony to one grand result. "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." "The field is the world." Thus we are taught that this world is a great harvest-field; and all good men, whatever their sect-name, and whatever office they may perform in the Church, are fellow-laborers in it. Each one will bring his sheaves with him in the grand harvest-home of heaven: from every sect sheaves will be

brought, and from every nation, by him who feareth God and worketh righteousness. Again, Christian enterprise is likened unto the erection of a building. God is the Great Architect, and all good men are employed to execute His designs. It requires a variety of craftsmen and of material, and a combination of the different talents and different materials to raise a temple or palace. In building the temple at Jerusalem, there was Hiram of Tyre, a skilful worker in gold and silver, in purple and blue and fine linen; and there were bearers of burdens and hewers of wood. And the workmen were not only diversified in their capacities, but the scenes of their activities were varied and distinct. Some were in the forests of Lebanon, some in the quarries, and some floating timbers upon the sea; but all were contributing to the completion of one grand design. Had the carver in gold or the embroiderer of purple seen the rough stone in the hands of their fellow-workmen in the quarry, they might have despised it as compared with their more elegant work; but that unshapen stone may have been fashioning for the corner-stone of the temple. So it is in the cause of God. Some contribute the influence of great talents, and some the humble labor of their honest hands; some shine in conspicuous places, and others serve in obscurity. The scenes of their activity are also varied: in the various churches and the varied forms of religious enterprise. Some preach the Gospel amid the comparative ease and comfort of a refined civilisation; some amid the dangers and privations of the rude state of the barbarian; some teach in Sunday-school; some speak a word for Jesus on the street or in the place of business; some distribute tracts; some visit the sick and the prisoner; some contri-

tribute of their means, from the princely gift of thousands to the Christly mites of the widow who gave all she had; and some who have nothing else, waft to the Throne the sweet-smelling incense of the heart's sacrifice of prayer. Thus all good men, whatever their ability, or Church place, or sphere of activity, are laborers together with God.

Let us learn, then, to recognise every one who is doing good in the name of Jesus as one who is aiming, though perhaps in a different way, at the same result with ourselves. Let us honor him, and bid him God speed. Let us be careful that we do not exalt party names above that Name which is above every name; and remember that One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. Let us also learn to be content with the sphere and duty assigned in the field of Christian labor. Judge nothing before the time. We do not know what God is working out by us. "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." His work is the conception of infinite wisdom. His plans could not be understood by us, even if revealed, for we are finite: now we can only know in part. We may be dissatisfied with results of our life, as measured by our soul's aspirations, and the consciousness that we have capacities for something better than any fruits of our life which do yet appear. But let us wait. Our achievements here are fragmentary, but there is a grand unit to which the Divine Being is directing all the moral activities of the universe. And as the united work of the ancient builders produced the material temple at Jerusalem, the united labors of God's servants will raise a spiritual temple, which will rise even into the heavens, where the topmost stone will be laid amid the acclaims of adoring saints and angels of Grace, grace unto it!

God is working in this world. Infidels may have a world without God in it, so far as their thoughts or wishes may be concerned; but He is the director and the efficient cause in the movements of the world. He is working His sovereign will: none can stay His hand, or say What doest thou? He works silently, invisibly, continuously, mysteriously, and omnipotently. As He wrought through the six days, in the beginning, and the result was the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the crowning glory of the creation of man in His own likeness and image, He is now working out the grander result of the new creation of man, in the image of Him who created him, and of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell forever. An author, whose name I cannot recall, has written an essay in which he takes the position that "The errand of creation was the enthronement of Christ," and the drift of his thought seems to be this: that the scheme of redemption was not a suddenly devised scheme of the wisdom and mercy of God to meet an unexpected contingency, but a preconceived thought for the ultimate execution of which the universe itself was created. This theory would seem to have some countenance from the passage in Colossians, where the Apostle, in speaking of redemption through Christ, declares that: "By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth; . . all things were created by Him and for Him." And from this we may conclude that the world only endures for the work which God means to perform in Christ; and when that is performed it will be destroyed. This work comprehends all that glorifies Him and immortalises man. He is the efficient cause, but He graciously

condescends to employ men as instruments; and thus we become workers together with Him. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Then the only profitable use we can make of life is to work together with God; for everything but His work will perish.

Let us consider the qualifications necessary for this work:

1. *An intimate acquaintance with His will and purposes.* There is a necessary connexion between the knowledge and service of God. The knowledge necessary is only that of our duty. It is not necessary for the soldier to know the plans of the general; it is enough for him to know the word of command and to obey it. As the servant looks with deference to the superior power which controls him, we must look to God for direction. We must commit our ways unto the Lord, and not seek to please ourselves. We must study to show ourselves workmen approved; our zeal must be according to knowledge. Of the Lord of the vineyard, who gives to every one his work, we must humbly ask: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Duty may be learned from His written word and the indications of His providence. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Providence, to the observant, often points to specific duties. Like Elijah, we should ascend the mountain height of prayer, and narrowly scan the spiritual horizon to see the faintest moving of the Spirit of the Lord;

or like David, when we "hear the sound of a going" of the Lord, we should bestir ourselves to follow Him. If we are not watchful of opportunities of doing good, many will pass by, leaving us painful memories of the good we might have done. Neglected opportunities never return. Perhaps some persons have gone into eternity to whom we owed a duty which we neglected, and the memory of those neglected opportunities is now a bitterness to the soul. That was a sorrowful experience to the disciples when the Saviour found them sleeping instead of watching, and said: "Sleep on now, and take your rest; it is enough the hour is come; behold the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

2. *Our hearts must be in sympathy with God.* We must enter into fellowship with His affections, thoughts and purposes; His mind must be our mind, and His will our will. Not a mere party spirit, zeal for the success of a sect interest, but the love of Christ, must constrain us. Our hearts must be in the work. It is useless to educate a young man for a profession for which he has no taste. He may pursue it, but it will be a heartless drudgery, and in it he will never excel. And a slave who has no interest in his work, who plods through the appointed hours of toil, indifferent to the result of his labor, is an unprofitable servant. A man must have a taste for his calling to become eminent in it; a passion for it, which is an inspiration in the soul of the poet, or which causes the man of science to live as under the spell of a mighty enchantress, while working out some new discovery; yea, rather, like the divine inspiration of the old prophet, which was "in his heart as a burning fire, shut up in his bones." Too many professors are like the Laodiceans, who

made a profession of religion, but had no warm-hearted piety, and who, in consequence, became distasteful to the Lord, who said concerning them: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." How different it was with Paul, who exhibited such zeal and unworldliness that the Corinthians called him a fanatic, to which he replied: "Whether we be beside ourselves it is to God: or whether we be sober it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us." The same inspiration would be effectual in leading us to emulate the self-sacrificing zeal of him who was in labors more abundant, in journeyings often, in perils by land and sea, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings and hunger, and thirst and cold and nakedness; not counting his life dear unto him. To the Philippians he said: "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." A similar spirit animated William Carey, the missionary to India. Without a friend, upbraided by his wife, and suffering the ills of poverty, he said: "I feel happy in this, that I am engaged in the work of God, and the more I am employed in it, the more I feel it a rich reward. Indeed I would rejoice in having undertaken it, even though I should perish in the attempt. I feel a burning desire that all the world may know this God, and serve Him." Such examples prove that if our hearts are in sympathy with Him, we will labor unweariedly, give unsparingly, and, if need be, suffer to the utmost extremity for His glory. This leads us to remark:

3. *That self-denial is requisite.* All religious ser-

vice is of the nature of a sacrifice, a taking of something which was our own and presenting it unto God. Hence the exhortation: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God, which is your reasonable service." Jesus gave Himself and suffered, the just for the unjust. The vicarious principle runs through all the relations of the Gospel, not only as between Christ and the human race, but as between man and his fellows. We must suffer one for another, for our mutual benefit; and this principle of suffering for the good of another ennobles and elevates us—it brings us up to the plane on which Christ stood in His relation to mankind. Selfishness utterly disqualifies a man for the work of the Lord; hence it is written: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself." Everything must be held subservient to the claims of Jesus: friends, talents, property, country, ease, liberty, and even life itself. I point you to Rev. John Scudder, who was for thirty years a missionary to India, as an illustration of this spirit. He was engaged in the practice of medicine in New York; and just at a time when he had attained to eminence in his profession and to worldly prosperity, there came to his notice a little book entitled "The Conversion of the World, or the Claims of Six Hundred Millions." He read it, and it entered his soul as a call from God. Falling on his knees, he cried: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "Go and preach my Gospel to the heathen," was the answer of the Spirit in his soul. To obey the mandate, what had he to sacrifice? Let his biographer relate the struggle and the triumph: "Here was a profession growing rapidly upon him. Hundreds had become attached to him as a Christian physician. Here was a tender, a beloved wife, who married him with no

idea of leaving home and friends to live and die an exile on heathen soil. Here also was a first-born child of only two years. Could he plant and rear that little flower where no sunlight of heaven was shining? Wide also was the circle of Christian influence surrounding him. Such were the pleadings against going to the heathen to labor and die as a missionary of the Cross." But against all this rose the Cross and a dying Saviour, saying: "If I, your Lord and Master, have done and suffered all this to save these poor benighted ones, will you hesitate to carry them the glad tidings of salvation?" The Cross prevailed. On his knees he said: "Lord Jesus, I go as Thou hast commanded, to preach the Gospel to every creature."

4. *Decision is necessary.* "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," is an inspired aphorism which has been illustrated in the character of men in all ages. "Woe unto him that is faint-hearted," says the son of Sirach. He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. To be of any essential service to the world, a man must be of such fixed principles that you find him the same at all times and under all circumstances; not full of zeal in a revival and full of the world at other times; not merely a Christian when it is popular and profitable, and denying the faith when sacrifices are to be made, or prejudices braved, or opposition encountered; but steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

The history of the world shows that it is the men of decision who have been those, under God, who have moulded its character and shaped its course. To these men we are pointed as examples of imita-

tion. We are told of Camillus, who threw his sword into the scales instead of the gold of ransom, thus committing the Romans to a battle which saved their city from conquest by the Gauls; and of Cæsar, pausing for a moment before invading Italia, the sacred and inviolable, then, saying the *die is cast*, and then crossing the Rubicon. The history of religion furnishes us still more illustrious examples. Athanasius was so resolute in defence of the truth that his conduct was the inspiration of that sentiment of the Christian classics, *Athanasius against the world.* Basil the Great, when threatened with the power of his enemies, said: "When the cause of God and religion is at stake, we overlook all else and fix our eyes only upon Him. In such cases fire and sword, wild beasts and instruments to tear off our flesh piecemeal, are a pleasure rather than a torment to us. You may therefore reproach and threaten us; do your pleasure and use your power, but let the Emperor know you cannot conquer us." John Huss, fighting with worldly men for a pure Revelation, declared the resolute purpose of his soul thus: "I avow it to be my purpose to defend the truth which God has enabled me to know, and especially the truth of the Holy Scriptures, even to death. And if the fear of death should terrify me, still I hope in my God, and in the assistance of the Holy Spirit, that the Lord Himself will give me firmness." To these we may add the declaration of Luther: "I am called in the name of God to go, and I would go though I were certain to meet as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the houses." The Gospel record tells us of men who subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, endured mocking, scourging, imprisonment; they were

stoned, sawn asunder, wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

It is by such intrepid souls that victory is to be won in the cause of God, and not by the timid, wavering and time-serving. Such decision is needful to overcome the scorning of the unbelieving, the seductions and the persecutions of the world, and the opposition of the powers of darkness. Therefore, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

> "One sally of a hero's soul
> Does all the military art control.
> While timorous wit goes round or fords the shore,
> He shoots the gulf and is already o'er;
> And when the enthusiastic fit is spent,
> Looks back amazed at what he underwent."

5. *Faith and Patience are requisite.* Patience with the ignorance and indifference and ingratitude of those we would serve, and patience to wait for the fruit of our labors, and the faith that God is not unjust to forget our labor of love. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven in meal. The leaven is a hidden element, it works silently from the centre out through the mass. So our work may be producing effect in the hearts of those we are trying to save, concealed from our eye; a silent influence, but a sure saving power. Many children have gone as prodigals from home, carrying the mother's Christian influence so smothered down by worldliness, that after long years of hope deferred, these mothers seem to be doomed to go down to their graves with a hopeless sorrow for their sons; yet they have returned to bless her for her pious teaching and holy example, and make her heart sing for joy over their conversion. Many Sabbath-School

teachers have thought they were laboring in vain with some dull and vicious boy, but in after years have heard the glad tidings of salvation trembling on the lips of that boy, and had more than a recompense for years of pains in his behalf, as with choked voice he said, "God bless you, sir, for your faithful loving instruction." Oh, be patient and take heart, ye servants of Jesus. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

As suggestive of encouragement, let us consider these words: *Are we laborers together with God?* Then how honored we are! If soldiers feel honored who marched under the banners of some military leader, those for example who were of Cæsar's legion, or Napoleon's guard, or Washington's patriot band, how should we feel honored who serve under the great Captain of Salvation, the Conqueror of death and hell! The patriarchs, prophets and apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer in such a cause. We are honored by association with all the great and good men who have ever blessed the world by their labors, and with the angels who are ministering spirits sent to minister to the heirs of salvation. And how honorable is our reward! He will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life. The promise is, that we shall sit upon thrones reigning as kings; our names shall be written in the Lamb's book of life, and we shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

Are we laborers with God? Then how beneficent

the influence of our lives! We are saving souls. Let us illustrate by an incident published by the religious newspapers. A few years ago a steamer was coming from California. The cry of Fire! Fire! suddenly thrilled every heart. The efforts to stay the flames were vain. It soon became evident that the ship must be lost. A passenger was seen buckling his belt of gold around his waist, ready to plunge into the waves. Just then a pleading voice arrested him. "Please, sir, can you swim?" A child's blue eyes were piercing into his deepest soul as he looked down upon her. "Yes, child, I can swim." "Well, sir, won't you please to save me?" I cannot do both, he thought. I must save the child, or lose the gold. But a moment ago I was anxious for all this ship's company; now I am doubting whether I shall exchange a human life for paltry gold. Unbuckling the belt, he cast it from him and said, "Yes, little girl, I will try to save you." Stooping down, he bade her clasp her arms around his neck. The child fell upon his broad shoulders and clung to her deliverer. With a heart thrice strengthened and an arm thrice nerved, he struck out for the shore Wave after wave washed over them, but still the brave man held out, and the dear child held on until a mighty mountain billow swept the sweet treasure from his embrace and cast him senseless on the bleak rock. Recovering consciousness, the form of the dear child met his earliest gaze, bending over him with more than angel ministrations, and blessing him with mute but eloquent benedictions.

Here was one saved from temporal death, but we are saving *souls* from *eternal* death; the child was saved from a watery grave, but we are saving men from the lake of fire that burneth forever and ever.

And as the child greeted her deliverer on the seashore, so will those saved by our instrumentality be there to meet and greet us on the shore of eternal deliverance, when the storm and the darkness and the dangers of the voyage of life are over.

Every one may have a share in this blessed work. It is not restricted to the pulpit, and to those in high places, and those having great talents. Every one has influence according to the measure of the gift of Christ. The Sunday-school teacher, the tract distributor, those who teach their children at home, those who visit the sick; in short, whosoever, according to his ability and opportunity, lends a helping hand to the cause of Christ — even though it be the hand of the poor widow which has but two mites, or a hand that can only hold a cup of cold water for Jesus — is recognised by our glorious Lord as a worker together with Himself. A story is told by Ralph Waldo, of a king who wished to build a cathedral and take all the glory to himself, and therefore forbade any from contributing to it in the least degree. A tablet was placed in the side of the building, and in it his name was carved as builder. But he saw in a dream, an angel, who came and erased his name, and the name of a poor widow appeared in its place. This was three times repeated, when the enraged king summoned the woman before him, and demanded, "What have you been doing, and why have you broken my commandment?" The trembling woman replied, "I loved the Lord, and longed to do something for His name and for the building up of His Church. I was forbidden to touch it in any way; so in my poverty I brought a wisp of hay for the horses that drew the stones." And the king saw that her gift of love for the glory of God

was counted as greater than all he had done, and he commanded that her name should be inscribed on the tablet. All praise to the name of our glorious King! He gives no exclusive prerogative to the great and the learned and the wealthy in His service; all may take part in it. And though we may do no great thing as estimated by men, yet in His Kingdom many of the least may be counted the greatest.

As laborers together with God, we are as certain of success as the Omnipotence of God can make it. "We grasp the right arm of the All-powerful by the hand of faith, and thus become invested with a portion of Omnipotence." In our effort to accomplish anything for God, we are conscious of utter personal impotence; "we have no confidence in the flesh," and realise the weakness of "earthen vessels;" and this often discourages us so that our knees are feeble and our hands hang down. But when we look to the great Captain of our salvation, then our confidence is strong. As the Roman proverb, "It is unbecoming a Roman soldier to fear while Cæsar lives," sent courage into every heart; and as the speech of another military leader to his men, "How many do you count me for?" inspired them with renewed hope when they were wavering before the number of their enemies; so there is inspiration of hope and power in the assurance of Jesus the Omnipotent, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." We can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us. If God be for us, who can be against us? It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. In all things we are more than conquerors, through Him that hath loved us.

Come, cheer thee to the toil and fight;
'Tis God, thy God, defends the right;
He leads thee on.
His sword shall scatter every foe,
His shield shall ward off every blow;
The Crown is won.

His is the battle, His the power,
His is the triumph in that hour;
In Him be strong.
So round thy brow the wreath shall twine,
So shall the victory be thine,
And thine the song.

The Gospel Ministry:

A SERMON, DELIVERED BEFORE THE MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH, AT WESTMINSTER, MARYLAND, ON THE 9TH OF MARCH, 1870.

By Rev. William C. Lipscomb,
A Ministerial Minister thereof.

"We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—II Corinthians, v: 20.

The inspired writers have arranged mankind in two general divisions. One of these divisions they have designated by the terms godly, righteous, saints; the other, ungodly, unrighteous, sinners. As the latter class everywhere largely outnumbers the former, it may be presumed that they constitute a large proportion of all public religious assemblies. Indeed, it is well-known that many of them liberally appropriate their money to sustain the institutions of Christianity, and are regular in their attendance on the services of the sanctuary. How far these statements may be applicable to this audience, it is not my province to determine. And, though it would afford me pleasure to believe that every person present has experienced the saving grace of God, such a conclusion, it is probable, would not be sustainable. Before me, however, are now seated the members of the Maryland Annual Conference, comprising, in my judgment, a body of as true-hearted ministers and laymen as can be found anywhere.

There are, also, here, visiting brethren from distant churches, who have come to us "in the unity of the spirit and in the bonds of peace," to receive and reciprocate those Christian courtesies God's love so sweetly inspires.

Supposing that the opening services of the Conference would bring together such an assemblage as the preceding remarks indicate, the respectful invitation tendered me by our worthy Executive, to occupy the position I now fill, caused me much embarrassment. And it was not until I had been led to hope that, by Divine assistance, I might be able to meet the responsibilities of the occasion, with edification to others and pleasure to myself, that my answer of acceptance was given.

In considering the several particulars expressed in the text, I shall take the liberty of inverting the order in which they are presented.

We may notice, briefly —

I. *The doctrine of reconciliation with God.*

Writers on the English language explain reconciliation to mean the restoration of friendship between persons or parties at enmity. Without questioning the correctness of this definition, it is proper to observe that some qualification will, nevertheless, be necessary in its application to the text, lest we run into error.

Enmity may be the result of animosity mutually cherished and manifested by persons or parties toward each other, or it may be felt and exhibited in acts of hostility from one person or party to another without exciting similar feelings or conduct in return. The holy Scriptures frequently refer to mankind as being at variance with the Almighty. "The

carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Roms. viii: 7.) But I am not aware that they ever represent the Most High as being at enmity with man. Indeed they teach an adverse doctrine, as reference to the 19th verse of the chapter from which the text is taken will show: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This language I understand to mean, that there is no enmity with God to be removed in order to the restoration of friendship with Him. And I suppose the text to convey the same idea. "Be *ye* reconciled to God."

True, He has made known His disapprobation of sin by the infliction of merited punishment. This He will continue to do while men shall wickedly disregard His authority, and contemptuously neglect His salvation. But such punishment has no connection whatever with enmity, nor yet unkindness. Its origin and enforcement are the offspring of justice, a principle quite as much a component part of God's government as mercy or any other attribute of His character.

Looking back to the origin of our species as recorded in the sacred history, we find that a state of mutual friendship then existed between God and man; actually as to Adam and Eve, and prospectively as to their posterity. Through lying deception of the devil, these very interesting relations were so seriously interrupted as to result in the alienation of their affections from Him, and rebellion against His authority, by the original progenitors of our race. And this, agreeably to the law of cause and effect, has continued to be the natural condition of their descendants ever since; a condi-

tion evidently referred to in the text, and for which it distinctly points out the only hopeful remedy, viz: "reconciliation with God." And let me say, we here have an instance of what was common with New Testament writers, that of expressing in a word or two the practical effects of redemption. Indeed, so perfect is the unity of the several parts of the plan of salvation, and such the beautiful harmony they sustain to each other in accomplishing their glorious work, that whenever a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel is mentioned, all others are included. Reconciliation with God therefore necessarily embraces the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ, repentance and faith, justification and adoption. A cordial acceptance and faithful improvement of these merciful provisions of God's restoring grace will most assuredly lead to holiness of heart and life, victory over death, and a crown of glory in heaven.

It is proper, however, in connection with these remarks, to add that repentance and faith sustain a relation to this subject that other doctrines of the Gospel do not. They are, in fact, precedent conditions with which there must be a compliance before reconciliation with God can possibly be realised.

I shall now proceed to consider, and more at length —

II. The *expostulation* of the text: "*We pray you in Christ's stead.*"

With regard to this branch of the subject I may observe —

1. That to give these words "we pray you" their utmost latitude of application, they may be supposed to include the entire Church of Christ, as ex-

erting her influence in the glorious work of saving perishing sinners. Nor would such an application by any means do violence to the spirit of the text. Almighty God, moved by the benevolence of His nature, having sent His well-beloved Son into the world, that it, through the shedding of His blood, might be placed in a savable condition, the same motive may be presumed to excite a desire with those who have been created anew in Christ Jesus that others might also be made partakers of like precious faith with themselves; and that this desire should appropriately develop itself by the actions of individuals and communities. Oh, what a power could thus be brought to bear in favor of the Redeemer's kingdom! And yet it is to be feared that a vast proportion of those who profess allegiance to Christ and declare identity with His cause are unjustifiably remiss in this particular. "To do good and communicate, forget not" (Heb. xiii: 16) is just as plain a precept of Christianity as "Love the brotherhood" (1. Peter ii: 17). Many, I know, excuse themselves from active exertion in the cause of Christ on the ground of incapacity. But this plea, as I apprehend, will not avail in all cases before the Judge of the quick and the dead. The grace of God never was and never will be dispensed to any one merely to be "put under a bushel" (Matt. v: 15), or "hid in the earth" (Matt. xxv: 15). Accountability to God not only includes the number and nature of His bestowments, but also the *proper use* thereof, whether many or few, great or small. By reference to the parable of the talents, as reported in chap. xxv. of Matthew, you will find these points fully settled. There always have been, and ever will be, persons within reach of the most illiterate

members of the Church. And if the life of these humble members is consistent with the professions of religion they make, their piety will be respected. And this respect may render a single remark uttered in the meekness and simplicity of true discipleship to the Saviour, quite as effectual in the conversion of a soul as a thoroughly prepared discourse. From these remarks you are not to conclude that I am an apologist for wilful ignorance. By no means. It is the duty of all those who have experienced renewing mercy and grace to prepare themselves for usefulness, by diligently improving every means within their reach; not only by the more practical works of piety, but also by the acquisition of knowledge and its judicious application.

2. By the phrase "*We pray you,*" the Apostle is to be understood as more particularly referring to Himself and fellow-laborers in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, his and their successors in the ministerial office through all after-time.

The sentence of which the text makes a part reads thus: "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

That the great head of the Church did call, qualify, and send forth men of like passions with ourselves to preach the everlasting Gospel, will not be doubted by any one who credits the historical records of His sojourn on earth. And that He also designed to perpetuate an active ministry in the Church is equally clear. This may be inferred from the commission given to the Apostles just before His ascension to heaven: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi: 15). "And, lo! I am with you alway, even

unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii: 20). These declarations are conclusive evidence of the Redeemer's design as to this important part of the plan of salvation; and in the history of the Church we have proof of the fact. As in former ages, so in the present, a pure Gospel ministry still continues to dispense its blessings to our sinful race.

In executing their commission, it is the duty of the "ambassadors for Christ" to make known the terms upon which sinners may be "reconciled to God," viz: repentance for sin, and faith in the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ. There cannot be pardon without repentance, nor justification except by faith. They should also set forth the blessed results of promptly accepting the conditions offered, and the fearful consequences of persistent rejection; the former, as securing the favor of God during the present life, and the bliss of heaven thereafter; the latter, as incurring His displeasure in this world, and "everlasting punishment" in that to come.

The next step to be taken by the messenger of mercy is that of entreaty or expostulation: "*We pray you.*" Believing, as I most conscientiously do, that this course of procedure is required by the general teachings of the Bible, and in perfect accordance with moral agency as a fundamental principle of accountability, I feel myself at full liberty to assert, and in the most unqualified manner, that the Gospel of the grace of God does not grant to any man or body of men whatever, the right to employ compulsory means in carrying out Heaven's benevolent scheme of redeeming mercy. Whether my respected hearers will be pleased to accept this language as expressing good divinity or not, they will be left to determine for themselves. I do hope, however, that

my candid utterances may at least be regarded as the result of careful and unbiased reflection. And yet, as is well known, men professing to have been vested with sacerdotal functions under the authority of "the Prince of Peace," also eagerly grasped and tenaciously maintained civil dominion. And this unnatural union — this unholy alliance of Church and State, marked their terrible effects on the bloody scaffold, amidst the crackling flames at the stake, and in the horrible dungeons of the Inquisition. The employment of these or similar measures under the absurd pretext of reconciling sinners to God, is to scandalize the doctrines of the Gospel, and to say virtually that Paul was a fool when he penned the words of the text.

And what a comment is all this on the personal character of the Saviour, and the peculiar nature of His cause as described by Himself! In regard to the former He said, "I am meek and lowly of heart" (Matt. xi: 29). As to the latter He emphatically declared, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii: 36). Therefore, to abrogate or so modify any inherent principle of this kingdom as to pervert the purposes of its Executive Head, is nothing less than the grossest sacrilege. This fiendish spirit of intolerance, the prolific source of unknown suffering and untold misery in the old world, at length discovered itself in the new. Scarcely had the persecuted Puritans of Europe found an asylum in the wilds of North America ere they became the persecutors of others, even to banishment and death. It is amazing to see how men's principles and conduct are often affected by a reversal of circumstances. Alas for the inconsistency of poor humanity! And, within the recollection of

many persons yet living, a large and influential Christian denomination put forth the utmost strength of its judicial power to crush a movement by which was sought a modification of the governmental polity thereof, such as its advocates honestly believed to be both Scriptural and expedient. In these transactions your speaker found himself among the persecuted. With others, he was made to feel the exercise of Church discipline for deeds done in support of that righteous cause. Those who forced us from their communion, in some instances by absolute expulsion, in others by prescribing terms to remain that self-respect forbade our approving, thereby precipitated an organization they neither expected nor desired. We promptly accepted the issue thus presented by our mistaken brethren, from an undoubted conviction that Almighty God would overrule the whole matter for His glory. And has He not most signally so done? Tell me, what mean the imposing exercises of this day? Your answer may be safely anticipated as follows: They indicate the present prosperous condition of the Maryland Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. As representatives from all parts of the District, I greet you, my brethren, as worthy descendants of noble ancestors. From the fulness of my heart I bid you God speed, while perpetuating in all their original purity and integrity the glorious institutions handed down to you by the fathers of our Church. Nearly all of those venerated men now peacefully sleep in Jesus. "They rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Rev. xiv: 13). Undisturbed repose to their ashes, unalloyed bliss for their pure spirits!

Most devoutly do I thank God that it has been

my high privilege to witness the advance of our beloved Zion to its present proportions. Ay, to behold the expanding influence, east, west, north and south, of those principles of ecclesiastical right to which fifty years ago I gave my hearty support, amidst trials of peculiar delicacy. And if "the signs of the times" are not strangely delusive, the day is not far distant when the founders of the Methodist Protestant Church will stand before the American people fully vindicated as the true friends of "mutual rights," and as having been worthy of other treatment than that they were doomed to suffer. My respected hearers will please excuse any of these remarks that may be deemed inappropriate to the occasion. They have not been prompted by unkind feelings to either the living or the dead, but merely as illustrative of the doctrine I entertain and designed to advocate, viz., that so far as human agency is concerned in the use of those means necessary to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, expostulation should be employed in their application, and not compulsion. The former always; the latter never! no, never!

This expostulation should be made

3. As *in Christ's stead.*

An agency or mission becomes more or less momentous as the authority creating it may be esteemed worthy of respect, and the object to be accomplished shall be regarded beneficent. And what agency or mission was ever created so full of interest to the human family as that which received its development by the incarnation of the Son of God — the establishment of the Christian Church with its Gospel ministry and means of grace? Originating as did this scheme of human redemption in the disinter-

ested benevolence of God, matured as it was in the councils of eternity, unworthy Judea witnessed its introduction into the world, and universal Christendom this day rejoices in its triumphant success. And hope, yea, well-founded hope, looks forward to yet more glorious results by the same instrumentalities. Truly, indeed, may the humble herald of the Cross tremble when contemplating the relation he sustains to this vast enterprise of evangelising the world; and if he properly appreciates the nature of the commission he bears, all his ministrations will breathe the same spirit that actuated the Apostle when he wrote the words of the text: "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

In Christ's stead.

This I understand to import something more than what is meant "by the election of thy brethren and the imposition of our hands," as set forth in the ordination formulary of the Methodist Protestant Church. I admire these consecrating services because they are simple in arrangement and suitably expressed. But neither the forms which we have adopted and observe, nor yet all the pomp and splendor of St. Peter's at Rome, can place the recipient of holy orders in the position assigned him by the text. That is exclusively the work of the Holy Spirit. No man can personate the Lord Jesus Christ unless actuated by the high and holy motives that dwelt in His bosom.

Love to poor sinful humanity and tender sympathy in its manifestation, were always present in His sayings and doings. And wherever this love exists to the extent it should, similar purity of purpose and meekness of manner will most certainly characterise the ministrations of the representatives of

Jesus Christ. It is arrogant presumption, if not downright wickedness, to approach this divinely instituted office under the influence of any other principle. Mark, if you please, the following emphatic language of St. Paul: "Now, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. viii: 9.) It is not to be inferred from hence that every man who may be favored with the saving grace of God is thereby called to officiate at the altar of the sanctuary. Certainly not. But in my judgment this citation does warrant the conclusion that no man can act "in Christ's stead" until prepared therefor by His spirit. Professions of religion however earnestly made, forms of godliness though strictly observed, do not constitute true piety; nor can the mere investment of a man with ministerial functions by human agency, however impressively done, constitute him an "ambassador for Christ" in the meaning of the text. For according to St. Paul, "No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (Heb. v: 4.) Unto all such the spiritual assistance necessary for this holy work will be imparted. Believing that a dispensation of the Gospel has been committed unto me, however unworthy of the trust, and being conscious of the purity of purpose by which I was governed in approaching the pulpit, I tender to the laity of this assembly for their acceptance and application to myself, and through me to every herald of the Cross now present, the following beautiful lines of Cowper —

"There stands the messenger of truth! There stands
The legate of the skies! His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace."

The object of my mission is that sinners may be "reconciled to God." What this interesting work of grace implies, the means by which it can only be effected, and the happy results thereof, immediate and remote, have been distinctly though briefly stated. But one other duty as connected with the subject in its relation to those of my respected hearers who are still at enmity with God, remains to be performed. And that is, to urge for a few moments, with all the earnestness of which I am capable, the expostulation of the text, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." I say "we," for surely every sincere lover of Jesus before me, whether of the ministry or laity, will cordially unite in this expostulation.

We do not, dear hearers, presume to make this appeal in our own name, but in that of "The Lord our righteousness." (Jer. xxiii: 6.) Nor would we dare to act in this important matter as of our own right, but by the authority of the supreme head of the Church, declared through the official bodies by which we are accredited. We appear before you, it is true, in the personality of flesh and blood; but nevertheless in lieu of our glorified Lord and Master. Hear us then, for the sake of Him whom we represent.

Oh! heed our message, because of the fearful consequences involved, present and future. In the name, by the authority, and "in Christ's stead, we pray you, be ye reconciled to God." By all that the adorable Saviour endured to secure your salvation, His toilsome life, His bitter agony in the garden of Gethsemane, His ignominious treatment in Pilate's hall, His murderous sufferings on the cross of Calvary, and His expiring exclamation, "It is finished," "we pray you, be ye reconciled to God."

By the short duration and the rapid flight of time, the certainty of death and the uncertainty when it will occur, the dread solemnities of a dying hour and the unalterable decisions of the Judgment-day, the blissfulness of the heavenly world and the wretchedness of the bottomless pit: "in Christ's stead, we pray you, be ye reconciled to God."

But if this array of motives adduced as the ground of our expostulation, and the earnestness with which it has been made, shall prove ineffectual, we have only to add that our skirts are clear of your blood, and we shall stand as witnesses against you before the Judge Eternal.

Having passed through the subject as originally designed, it will be brought to a close. I had thought of addressing the Conference a few additional remarks; but finding my feeble strength well nigh exhausted, I must forbear. Indeed, the interesting services (sacramental) awaiting your attention, would seem to render further effort on my part unnecessary. Let me therefore commend you to the God of all grace and consolation, who is able to make you wise unto salvation, and to give you an inheritance among them who are sanctified. And remember, dear brethren, that this is done by an old man, whose voice you will never again hear under similar circumstances.

The Great Work of the Gospel Ministry; or, Bringing Souls to Jesus.

A SERMON, PREACHED BEFORE THE MARYLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE, IN CHESTERTOWN, MARYLAND, MARCH 8, 1871.

By Rev. R. Scott Norris.

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him we have found the Messias; which, is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas; which is, by interpretation, a stone."—John i: 40-42.

The mission of John the Baptist was about to end. The public ministry of Christ had but recently commenced. There was a prevailing desire in Judea to see Him of whom it had been said, that Moses in the Law and the Prophets had written. John, with two of his disciples, was standing in the way when Jesus passed. He quickly recognised Him, for he had recently baptised Him in the Jordan. True to his usual mode of doing such things, he cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

It is said the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. (Four o'clock in the afternoon).

The presumption exists that they spent the night with Jesus! Where they lodged, or what was the precise character of their conversation, we are not informed. It is highly probable that the night was spent in discoursing about His mission to earth, and the work of the Apostles whom He was about to call. Be that as it may, the effect of this interview with the Saviour, as exhibited in their conduct on the following day, was truly marked. John, the Evangelist, supposed to have been one of them, modestly says nothing of himself. But of Andrew, his colleague, he remarks: "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messias; which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And He brought Him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone."

So much for the narrative. Underlying these statements there is a great theme. Upon that theme we desire to offer some reflections. The discourse will be regarded rather as a suggestive one for future elaboration than as an exhaustive effort upon a particular topic. We shall present it in the form of questions.

The great work of the Gospel ministry; or, bringing souls to Jesus.

I. We inquire, *Who is Jesus?*

To answer this question correctly, will be, at once, to point out the source of ministerial authority and power. This is not from the world, nor is it from the Church, but is derived directly from the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence He said to the

twelve: "Go ye into all the world and preach my Gospel to every creature."

Who is Jesus? There have been many replies given to this question; there can be but one proper answer: He is God manifest in the flesh. A son of Israel would say, "He is an impostor, and was therefore justly put to death." A certain mythical class would argue that "the whole account of the birth, life, sufferings, and death of Jesus is but an allegory, a sort of spiritual fable, conveying indeed some excellent moral teachings adapted to our present state of being — nothing more." Another class, more sensible, accord to Him the honor of being a great and good man, a noble reformer, a public benefactor, a martyr; one who strove to benefit His race while living, and who died bravely in defence of His cause. Some Unitarians take a step higher. They proclaim Him, if we understand them, not only as the Son of God, but as a Divine Saviour; yet, strange to say, they attempt to prove by this that He is not God, but a mere emanation from the Divine Father, a creature of the highest order.

The error of this latter class consists evidently in attempting to reason upon this question from a human standpoint. They seem to forget that while some things are clearly unreasonable and therefore absurd, others are above the grasp of the human mind — can only be received as accredited facts, while their nature or essence is not tangible. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

If therefore the Scriptures assert — clearly authenticated as they are to be the Word of God — if

the Scriptures assert that Jesus is God — a fact which we have shown to exist — then should the statement be received reverently as an article of our faith, then should we adore and trust Him as the co-eternal Son of God. Here then, brethren, we repeat, is to be found the source of our authority, the abode of that wondrous power by which alone we may bring souls to Jesus. Let us seek it.

We next proceed to notice a fundamental doctrine of the Christian system, one which greets us at the very threshold of our work — the great doctrine of Conversion. Or, shall we ask —

What is implied in bringing souls to Jesus? Certainly more than merely to effect a change in the outer life and manners. To accomplish this, nevertheless, is a good work; and he who becomes the agent is entitled to commendation.

It must signify more than a submission to the rite of baptism, a connection with the visible Church, or an attentive observance of the means of grace. It must certainly imply more than all these united. Paul gives his authority in saying, "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel." In his address to Timothy he portrays another class, whom he speaks of as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Simon, the sorcerer, was baptised by apostolic hands, yet proved himself subsequently to have been governed by corrupt motives. He was declared by the Apostle to be still "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." He became a great foe of the Church, and is said to have founded the sect of the Gnostics.

Conversion, or regeneration, is declared in the Divine Scriptures to be a purely spiritual work,

wrought in the soul by the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is a complete renovation of the moral nature. It is a new creation. Old things have passed away, all things have become new.

This transformation of the soul is clearly evinced by a change in the mode of life — the outer life — and by a succession of sacred fruits. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and works of like character, are seen to abound more and more as knowledge increases and as the experience becomes enlarged.

To commit a blunder in regard to any point of Christian duty is to incur injury; to make a mistake here, unless subsequently corrected, is to effect the ruin of the soul. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

This, then, is the great work of the Church, and especially of the ministry: so to preach the truth as it is in Jesus as to show mankind that their hearts and lives are alike corrupt, and that the only source of relief is by repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We shall now advance to speak of the *motives* which must govern the ministry in their work; or to inquire —

II. *Why should we bring souls to Jesus?*

Man, in the very nature of things, must in his outer acts be governed by motives reigning within. These, partaking of his fallen condition, must necessarily be tainted with selfishness. Grace has a transforming tendency. One of its first signs is observable in the regulation of our impulses, in the sanctification of our desires, in giving a proper bias to our affections.

Consistency.—This, perhaps, is one of the lowest in

order of the motives which we should attach to the work of the ministry. Still, it should not be overlooked. If a calling or profession be right in itself, whatever may be naturally or consistently implied in that profession should be faithfully carried out. Is it then true that the profession of the man of God, the very name and titles of his office as well as the vows of his ordination, suggest the conversion of mankind as his great work? Then should he be true to his profession. It is in this view that the Church has given its approval. Even the world, an interested spectator, expects nothing less. But above all, this has God Himself commanded. The man, therefore, who enters the ministry of Jesus Christ as a mere mercenary — whether for gain, the love of applause, or because of having previously adopted it as a profession — has either sadly mistaken his calling, or what is worse, basely prostituted his office to accomplish his own selfish ends. "He is a wolf in sheep's clothing."

Reciprocity.—There is a sense in which this is worldly and selfish, therefore to be condemned. Christianity places this principle upon higher grounds. "We love him," said the Apostle John, alluding to Christ, "we love him because he first loved us." Love begets love. Love is responsive in its very nature. It acknowledges the mighty debt, it seeks to make recompense. Happy, therefore, is that servant of God who has been thus reminded of his obligations to the Saviour, and who seeks with all earnestness and diligence to fulfil them. Such a motive must exert a helping influence to his labors, will add a lustre to his teachings.

Sympathy.—The presence of this influence under any form of manifestation, would seem to indicate

at first view that selfishness had not taken entire possession of our nature. To witness suffering, by almost every one, is to have excited in that breast a feeling of compassion, a desire to give relief. History, both ancient and modern, records many illustrious examples of this sort.

Could it be expected, therefore, of one who had himself experienced the horrors of sin, and who had obtained deliverance, that he could sit still unmoved with a world around him in ruins? Impossible. The bitter lamentations of Jeremiah over the sin-cursed Jerusalem, the inward groanings of Paul over the moral blindness and stupidity of his countrymen, the sad experience of every Christian heart — these prove conclusively that sympathy is pre-eminently an experience of the Christian heart, and one which gives a mighty impulse to the labors of a godly ministry.

The ministry of Jesus throughout displayed this trait of character in its highest forms, in its most beautiful aspects. It was not a simple weakness, but a mighty power. It exhibited itself in His prayers, it was most manifest in His teachings, it was in no mean degree the prompter of His miracles. A sympathetic minister in this exalted, Christ-like sense is one that will be successful.

Magnanimity.— This is another motive to ministerial effort. The world calls it greatness of mind. Would it be a magnanimous act for a man to rush into a burning building to save the life of another, and that too at the hazard of his own? None will doubt it. And shall the minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, with souls perishing all around him, do less? Shall he be less magnanimous? Shall he shrink from danger? Shall he court ease? God forbid.

Nay, let him count all things worldly but loss, so he may be honored with bringing even one soul to Jesus. Still more; with Paul for a model, let him not count his life dear unto himself, so that he may finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. Nothing more than this can be required, nothing less than this should be offered. "He that loseth his life for *my* sake shall find it."

The love of Christ.— This is the grand motive, and of all others the most sacred and influential. Others may excite, this constrains. Others are surely valuable, this absolutely indispensable. Others are indeed the offshoots of grace, this is the plant itself in its highest perfection. "The love of Christ constraineth us." Why? "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." It is love which communicates this intelligence — man's dead condition; it is love which provides the remedy — Jesus died.

The love of Christ as a constraining motive to the work of the ministry may be viewed either historically or experimentally.

The first has relation to what the Saviour has done for us; the second to a power communicated by the Holy Ghost given unto us. By the first we refer to His incarnation, humiliation, and death on the Cross — His present intercessions; also to the institution of the Church, the establishment of the ministry, the means of grace, the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. By the latter, to those blessed experiences of the soul which flow from grace, and which illustrate the power of love. Such are love, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, and faith. These are not only the fruits

of Christ's pure love, but united, form the constraining agency by which the world is to be saved. They constitute the perfection of Divine law. They are so sacred and pure that they violate no law.

Such then is the love of Christ. It is not only the grand motive power to ministerial effort, but the grand weapon of ministerial success. By its influence, prejudice has been overcome, truth has been circulated, souls have been redeemed. Its power of adaptation is such that it suits all nations, it affords relief to all classes. It cures the blindness of the Jew, it wipes out the impurity of the Gentile. It is health to the afflicted, joy to the sorrowful, a blessing to all mankind.

If you should still ask, Why bring souls to Jesus? our answer is stereotyped, we can give no other — "The love of Christ constraineth us."

We next proceed to speak of those times and seasons which may be regarded as offering special advantages in the way of ministerial success, or to inquire,—

III. *When should we bring souls to Jesus?*

1. We remark that it seems clear that all pulpit effort should look directly to this result. There are under-objects, so to speak, matters of no small concern because of the influences they are to exert in bringing about final results. Such are preaching, teaching, exhorting, and offering rebuke: these are to be carefully considered. Also the duty of studying variety in our subjects, and in adapting our labors to the varied wants and surrounding circumstances of the people whom we are called to serve. The young have their special wants; those of mature and vigorous age their necessities; the old and in-

firm their requirements. All should be remembered, all, in turn, provided for. These are some of the general points of ministerial obligation. In addition to these is the pastoral work — the duty of visiting from house to house, comforting, exhorting, instructing, and reproving. After all, the special point to be secured in these things is the salvation of the souls of those to whom we minister.

Present results.— Should we not train ourselves as ministers, and so teach our people that they will expect present results in the way of conversions? Should not our habitual method in conducting public worship embrace this idea? May not one soul each Sabbath be converted? Should not our weekly prayer meetings be thus signalised? Have we not depended too much upon our special or extraordinary efforts — our camp, protracted, and other such meetings, while the regular services of the sanctuary, if not underrated, at least have not been treated with that consideration to which they were entitled? These are questions which at least demand careful consideration, and which tend to the conviction in many thoughtful minds that more, much more might be done in connexion with our ordinary public ministrations in bringing souls to Christ, if our labors were differently directed, and our faith more active and direct.

Such was the result on the day of Pentecost. It was not uncommon under the preaching of the Wesleys and their contemporaries. It has occurred in many instances since. Why not now? Oh for an overcoming faith!

Providential events.— These should be especially regarded as seasons promising to the faithful minister of Christ good results. As in these visitations

of the Deity, gracious designs are had in view, so it is to be presumed that the hearts of many will be reached, and that some at least will be blest. The Gospel messenger is one of God's agents to bring about this result. We should see to it that His duty is well and faithfully performed. We should not allow these occurrences to pass without a special effort for improvement. Even though he should not realise at the time his full expectation, he may lay a good foundation for the future.

A skilful physician in treating his patient has recourse to various remedies, as the changing aspects of the case may require, still keeping in view the main point — the recovery of the sick one to perfect health. In this effort both skill and patience are required. So in the cure of souls. If we can secure thoughtfulness and attention where indifference prevailed, we have secured a result which may well inspire hope for the future. Or, if we can induce one who has been addicted to crime to behold his sin and turn therefrom, we may then indulge the hope that his salvation is not far distant. The work of grace is ordinarily slow and progressive; and sometimes, like the leaven, its operations may be silent and unperceived. Should there in the end be a failure, the responsibility must rest with man, not with God.

The period of youth.— This, doubtless, of all other periods of man's existence, is the most suitable and favorable to bring souls to Christ. It is a time of life upon which, for this work, the word of God places a special emphasis. Others may come to Christ; the young are especially named, and most pressingly invited. Their present freedom from vice, the tender condition of their hearts, their suscepti-

bilities for an easy bias for good — all these suggest the propriety of taking an advantage of this period to win them to the Saviour. The old axiom is certainly true in this case, it is better to prevent than to cure.

Another view may be stated. If the Creator be entitled by right to the services of all His creatures, with equal certainty is He entitled to the whole life. To defer then the work of religion beyond this period is not only highly inexpedient and dangerous, but is to be regarded also as a bold step in the direction of sin and presumption.

The youth as a class are alone appealed to in Scripture.— "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," is a memorable passage, and one which, while it places its seal of condemnation upon all manhood crimes, points with unmistakable precision and certainty to the period of youth as God's time to enter upon a preparation for eternity. How many have already been ruined because of the violation of this arrangement! How many of the living to-day are far away from God by wicked works, who, if they had obeyed the voice of the Spirit in early life, might now be happy in their experience, and joyful in the hope of heaven! Thank God that they still may be saved. Let all possible efforts be put forth to accomplish this result. Still, let it not be forgotten that the main hope and dependence of the Church in her struggle to convert the world, is through the children.

Sabbath-schools.— These have done much and are still doing more to advance the Redeemer's kingdom. Thousands upon thousands already saved and glorified, and thousands more yet waiting and watching on this side of Jordan, have been redeemed through this blessed agency.

It is admitted that they are not free from defects; some may have indeed been grossly perverted; still this is evidently the best plan we now know of. Therefore the ministry should here employ their most mighty energies, the membership put forth their most earnest and persistent efforts.

If abuses have crept into this department of the Church, let them at once be ferreted out and speedily removed. See to it that while the books are adapted in their reading matter to the age and advancement of the scholars, that the doctrines which they teach are pure and spiritual. *Admit no works of fiction.* The Sabbath-school is not the place to cultivate taste, but a circle to promote piety. Let the officers and teachers, as far as it is possible, be practical Christians; in all cases, persons of unblemished moral character. Let the great truth ever be kept before the minds of the children, that the leading object of their being thus brought together is to secure their early conversion to the Saviour. Let the parents at home, and in every way, co-operate with the Church in this great work, not forgetting that it is not substitutional but supplemental. Let each work in harmony with the other; all labor for the same great and glorious end: To bring the children savingly to Jesus.

Let us now speak of the Divine art, or more particularly let us inquire —

IV. *How shall we bring souls to Jesus?*

We cannot force them; we must win them. "He that winneth souls is wise."

The mind must first be enlightened. Divine truth is the agent. It must be imparted with proper caution, and with measured advances, so as to adapt

ourselves to time, place, surroundings, and to the character or characters of those whom we aim to reach. Otherwise, we may stir up a prejudice or awaken a suspicion which may be fatal to our success. "Who is sufficient for these things?" Yet through Christ we can do all things; He strengtheneth us. Prayer is indispensable; a holy life irresistible. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

A special baptism is required.—A man may possess grace sufficient to perform the ordinary duties of religion, such as going to the house of God, prayer, with an attendance upon Divine ordinances, and yet realise his unfitness for the work of pleading with sinners. What cowards we ordinarily are upon this point! To test the matter, we have but to make the effort; we shall then be convinced. David, the Psalmist, felt this necessity, and prayed for Divine help, that he might "teach transgressors the ways of the Lord, and that sinners might be converted."

From what has just been said it will be inferred that our efforts to a certain extent should be direct and personal. In many cases nothing short of this would result in success. "Thou art the man."

In this view of the subject, great prudence and circumspection of conduct is required. For the want of these, many well-meant efforts have not only failed in doing good, but have inflicted a serious injury. As already intimated, time, place, and circumstances are to be duly weighed.

Great patience is also required. Some minds operate slowly. An attempt to hurry would be but the certain prelude to an absolute defeat. The preju-

dices aroused by that single misstep may become the insuperable bar to all subsequent success. "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Our Relatives.—Those of our own households must not be forgotten in our anxiety for others. There is a great beauty and propriety in the fact that Andrew's first ministrations for good, after that memorable interview with the Saviour, was to visit his own brother and bring him to Jesus. The language is marked upon this point: "He *first* findeth his own brother"—his *own* brother. This expression is full of tenderness, and proves the strength of his attachment. "*Findeth* his own brother." He was therefore in search of him. What a striking evidence of his deep solicitude! We are not informed by the historian where Andrew found his brother Simon, what he said to him to influence him to act, or what difficulties he encountered. All we know, and this for our present purpose is sufficient, is this: Andrew's interview with the Saviour on the previous night was to himself a great blessing; he immediately went in pursuit of his brother; he brought him to Jesus. Let others follow this noble example.

Nor was the result of this pious effort less marked. When the two returned and came into the presence of the Saviour, it is said of Simon: "And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone." Several things are here worthy of special note, illustrating, as they do, the nature and progress of Christian effort.

First, it is said, "Jesus beheld him." This may have been in part a glance of inspection, or a cast of penetration. Yet this was not all; the act embodies much more. It was a look which commanded

respect, which awed into silent reverence, and which penetrated to the very depths of Simon's soul. That look was intended to prepare the way for moral results of the highest grandeur. From the position of a humble fisherman on the shores of Galilee, he was soon to be recognised as a disciple of the Son of God. As a disciple of Jesus, he was yet to be promoted to the high honor of being one of His most prominent apostles. "He said." Who said? Jesus. But what did He say? These are indeed mighty words. They breathe an omnipotent force; they revolutionise both name and character. "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona"—a name expressive of nothing at all great or commanding: "thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone"—a title indicating at once the dignity and strength of his future apostleship.

Thus, brethren, we have within the brief compass of these words the entire theology of conversion, the sum of ministerial obligation.

A few closing remarks, and we shall have covered our plan.

Brethren, ministers and laymen of the Conference, we are now in session as one of the leading bodies of our general Church connection. What has thus brought us together? To attend to the temporalities of the Church is indeed a part of our business. But this is not all. Great spiritual interests, involving the honor and prosperity of the Church, will come up before you, claim a part of your time, and be subject to your disposal.

This, for the time being, is our Jerusalem. Many of us have come from afar, and now meet for the first time during our session that we may worship together. We have, for the most part, left behind us

our toils and cares, and are now employed to our utmost endeavor to make this occasion one of both pleasure and profit. This is a fit time for personal and general review; a period suited to profitable anticipation. What have we done as a Church, as a Conference district, to advance the Redeemer's cause and to save souls? Notwithstanding our afflictions — no Church is exempt — we have cause for rejoicing. Ecclesiastically speaking, we are thankful to be able to say, we not only live, but our principles are steadily advancing. The two great bodies of Methodism in this country, who had previously differed with us on the question of lay representation, and whose presence in our midst might have been supposed to exert an overshadowing and embarrassing influence, have recently adopted our principles in part, and from the signs of the times are likely, at no distant period in the future, to take another step in the same direction. We record these facts with thankfulness and pleasure, and for the following reasons: First, because it is an encouraging sign of the fact that evangelical Christians are being brought closer together in fraternal bonds; secondly, the act is a complete and triumphant vindication of the Methodist Protestant Church.

Other matters of an ecclesiastical character, in some respects equally gratifying, and certainly nearer home, are now beginning to show themselves broadly to the public view; and, as we believe, augur well for the future of representative Methodism. The voice of Providence may now be understood, perchance, to say in our hearing, "Stand still and see." To-morrow it may ring out the clarion cry, "Go forward." Let us hear, ponder, and obey.

The past year, within the bounds of our own Con-

ference district, has been marked by signs of encouraging success. Our Church building and parsonage improvements have, we think, equalled any former year, as the prepared statistics will show. Our missionary and superannuated interests, though far from being what they ought to be, and certainly far below what they deserve, have nevertheless not been overlooked.

The Sunday-school department of the Church, of which we have recently spoken, and whose claims can scarcely be ranked too high, is claiming now special consideration.

Our College, a child of Providence, has prospered almost beyond precedent. Its growth has been rapid; and considering the limited number of its years, it enjoys unusual strength and vigor. As an institution of learning among us, its importance can hardly be reckoned. If properly cared for, it will become a power in the Church, both to the ministry and to the laity. But why rehearse all these matters? What have they to do with the subject in hand — bringing souls to Jesus? Much every way.

Beloved brethren, let not the business of this annual session crowd out of your hearts the spirit of devotion and prayer. Let us wait together in obedience to the command of the Master, expecting the descent of the Holy Ghost. He will not disappoint us. The baptismal shower will fall. Our minds shall experience fresh illumination, while our hearts shall be enlivened with new and more remarkable bestowments of grace. We shall then not only be the better prepared to transact our business with harmony and completeness, but be enabled also to occupy a higher point of Church observation.

Still more; when we separate and return to our appointed fields of labor, we shall enjoy a more enlarged fitness for our Church labors. We, brethren in the ministry, will be able to preach better. You, brethren in the laity, to hear with greater profit to your souls.

We shall also, both preachers and people, be better acquainted with our duties, understand more fully our obligations. There will be great peace reigning throughout our borders continually. The membership with their pastors will be united in a most hearty and complete co-operation. The Church will be completely aroused with the excitement of labor, and shall loudly echo with the chant of praise.

Better still: God's Word shall reach the unsaved. Transgressors will be arrested. The cry of the mourner will be heard. The voice of praise and deliverance shall greet the ears on every side.

The time is short.— The season for labor is passing. The whitened locks and furrowed cheeks of many around us to-day, should remind us of the fact that our strength at best will soon decay, and that the vigor of manhood will soon be expended. The shades of evening are fast drawing nigh. The night is approaching when no man can work. Work then manfully; and let your great, your principal effort be to bring souls to Christ.

There is yet a brighter view.— The toils and pains of life will soon end. The cross laid down, the crown will soon be taken up. Our reward is sure. Heaven is glorious. Its rest will be forever!

The Sublimity and Superiority of Christian Doctrine.

ONE OF A SERIES OF LECTURES.

By Rev. Levi R. Reese.

"And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrines: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."—Matt. vi: 28, 29.

To form an accurate judgment of any work, it is indispensable that we should be acquainted with its contents. So apparent is this truth that it is not necessary to present an argument in support of it; and as it is of universal application, so it applies with as much force to Christianity as to any other system. Therefore, to condemn the high claims of the Christian religion without a due examination of its evidences, and, especially, without a thorough knowledge of the contents of the sacred books, is as absurd and irrational as it would be to condemn a writer for slander whose production had not been read or understood. Yet there are individuals who proudly boast of their infidelity, and who live in avowed disbelief of the Divine oracles, or, which is the same thing, in practical indifference to its requirements, who are so ignorant of what Christianity is that they cannot so much as state its fundamental doctrines, much less controvert them on sound philosophical principles. The reason of this is, they will

not engage in the study of the sacred oracles with a teachable disposition: they would be convinced of its truth without knowing the contents of the Bible! Strange, passing strange, that men who talk so much about reason should act so contrary to reason. But, my friends, let us act more wisely. As Christianity professes to be Divine in her origin and authority, let us open her books, consult her oracles, and see whether she bears on her face the impress of her high Original. Let us lay aside the accumulated evidence of history, miracles, and prophecy, and entering her sacred enclosure, examine those internal traces of her royal birth which are found in her sublime doctrines.

The proposition we hope to establish on this occasion is as follows: viz., That the doctrines of the New Testament are so sublime and so superior to anything the world ever knew, so explanatory of many of the mysteries which have perplexed and embarrassed mankind, and so far above the power of unaided reason, that they convey to the candid mind the conviction that they are from above.

I. We shall speak in the first place of *their sublimity.*

1. The doctrines of Christianity relate to God and to man, and are therefore of the greatest importance and interest to us, since they are connected with our present and eternal home. See with what sublime views of the character of God they invest the mind! They present the Almighty to us as the self-existent and eternal Spirit, filling immensity with His presence, and looking with an intelligent eye on all the affairs of the heavens above and of the earth beneath: as infinite in wisdom, almighty in power, un-

sullied in purity, and of inflexible justice; as unchangeably the same great and glorious Being whose benevolence is as constant and universal as His presence and His power. What sublimity is here! How far removed from everything that can detract from the perfection of His nature! The mind cannot conceive of one attribute to add to His character, nor fix itself on one that is redundant. It is infinitely perfect.

And then we are told that God is the supreme sovereign of the universe, governing all His creatures by wise and wholesome laws — carrying on an administration upon just and impartial principles — and that while He seeks the happiness of all His creatures, the immutable principles on which that government is conducted are faithfulness, justice, truth, and benevolence. What more can the mind conceive? How can the soul grasp a more lofty and sublime conception of the Deity? The contemplation of these disclosures of Divine revelation overwhelms us with the transcendent glory and unapproachable perfection and majesty of the Supreme Being.

2. The same traces of the sublime are discovered in the doctrines of Christianity as they relate to the human race. With what bold coloring do we find portrayed the character of man! Do we see him in Eden? he is pure and good, bearing the impress of his Maker's moral image. Do we behold him after the apostacy? he is seen blackened with sin and deformed by indwelling pollution. And what shall we say of the wondrous plan of redemption? Can we think of anything more sublime than the incarnation of the Son of God? Here we have the Son of God — He who was equal with the Father in

power, wisdom, and glory — before whom angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim veiled their faces in high and Divine homage, descending from the bosom of the Father and assuming the nature of apostate man. Behold in Him a life transparent with every virtue! See Him amid the deep shadows of midnight a prostrate sufferer in the garden; on the cross a bleeding, dying victim, and then bear in mind that the great object of all this was to redeem a fallen race! Consider His resurrection and ascension to heaven; think of the outpouring of His Spirit; of the establishment upon earth of a kingdom which is destined to survive all other kingdoms; of the immortal destinies of man; of a coming judgment; of the resurrection of the dead; of the felicity and glory of His saints, and of the dreadful doom of the wicked, and then tell me whether there can be conceived a system of doctrines so entirely interwoven with each other, so consistent in themselves and in their connections, and so glorious and sublime as those which constitute the fundamental doctrines of our holy religion?

II. Sublimity is not the only characteristic of Christian doctrines: *they are vastly superior to any ever before known to the world.* With the exception of the Jews, the state of knowledge as to Divine truth was a sad comment on the depravity and ignorance of the world. Man had lost the knowledge of God. The dim light of philosophy was insufficient to recover it. Its brightest rays only served to excite without satisfying curiosity. How vastly superior is the doctrine of Christianity as to the character of God and the nature of His moral government— as to man in respect of his nature, personal and

social obligations and destiny — to the crippled and degrading doctrines of the most polished ages and people of the world! We will say nothing of the profound stupidity and ignorance of the mass of the people on these subjects — they knew comparatively nothing — but contrast the doctrines of their wisest sages and most renowned philosophers with those of Christianity. Take for examples the Epicureans, the Academics, the Stoics, the Platonists, the Orientals, or even the Gnostics, and how do they sink into ridiculous insignificance! What think you of the doctrine of a plurality of deities — of a corporeal God united to matter by necessary connexion and subject to an immutable fate? What think you of the notions entertained concerning man — that he is an emanation in his nature from God — that he is, like a plant or shrub, a mere form of material organization which lives and perishes and is no more; or, that, if he has a soul, it passes off into some other man or animal at his death? What think you of these in comparison with the doctrines of Jesus Christ? Do they not illustrate by strong lines of contrast the great superiority of the Christian system? Is it not the case that one system is like the gloom of a starless sky, leaving us to grope along in the dark amid numerous windings and by-paths, whilst the other is as the shining of the noon-day sun, beneath whose radiance we may see our way, and without obstruction explore the fields of Divine truth?

III. A third characteristic of the doctrines of Christianity is this: *They are explanatory of many of the mysteries which for ages perplexed and embarrassed the strongest and most intelligent minds.*

Before the light of Divine revelation shone out upon the world, it appears that almost every object of nature and of providence was a mystery. The world, its creation and its duration; man, his nature and his destiny; the existence of moral and physical evil, and the means of remedy — these, and others also, were subjects of exciting interest to mankind, and yet so dark was the cloud of mystery that hung around them that no mind could penetrate it. Various attempts were made to solve these difficulties, giving rise to as many systems of philosophical speculation; but they only served to show the extreme feebleness of human power. Some asserted the eternity of matter, and also maintained that the world had existed always, and would always exist, and so accounted for the existence of the earth. Some taught that man was the product of nature — the master-piece of material organization, differing from the horse or monkey only in the superiority of his structure; while all sorts of plans were resorted to in order to account for the origin and existence of evil in the world.

Now Christianity comes to our aid. She touches with the wand of truth these mysterious subjects, and the shadows are dispersed. She does not indeed come to reason with man as to the obscure and incomprehensible mysteries of the physical, moral, and intellectual universe; but with the authority of a Divine instructor to teach us facts, which being accredited, are entirely explanatory of all the mysteries around him. For example: Would we know the origin and end of the world? We are here informed that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and that in an appointed period He will destroy the earth by fire. Would we

know what man is, whether mortal or immortal, whether responsible or irresponsible for his actions; how it is that he approves the right and yet pursues the wrong? Would we know whence arise the physical and moral evils which agitate and degrade mankind, and how they are to be remedied? All these difficulties are solved by Revelation. The doctrines of Christianity teach us that man is the creature of God, dependent on His beneficence, and under obligation of obedience; that the miseries of human life and the calamities which distract social society are the legitimate result of man's revolt against the Divine government; that the passions which rankle in the soul and pollute our whole nature are not a part of our original character, but are the unwholesome growths which have sprung up from the seeds of his own iniquity; that though a fallen creature, he has been redeemed by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet his restoration to Divine favor and final salvation from sin are made dependent on his cordial reception of the Gospel, and a right improvement of the period of human life; that though man dieth and wasteth away, yet he will live again — the soul being immortal, and the body destined to a glorious resurrection from the dead; that eternity will be the period of unspeakable happiness or misery — of happiness to those who have served God, and of misery to those who have been disobedient. Thus in these and a few other important truths does Christianity set to rest the agitated bosom of man. Mysteries are solved, and we are no longer left to grope in darkness; whilst the repose which these doctrines give to the soul, when truly believed, is entirely satisfactory.

IV. Here we ask attention to this declaration: *that many of the doctrines of Christianity are so far above the powers of unaided reason, that they never would have been known unless it had pleased God to reveal them.* Let us take a few examples; viz., the *spirituality of God,* the *immateriality* and *immortality* of the soul, and the *resurrection* of the body. Now, the mind left to its own powers, never could grasp the conception of such truths, much less establish them on a permanent foundation. Exclude Divine revelation, and what sources of knowledge have we left? We have the senses and the reflective powers, but these, from their nature, confine us to the material world: we cannot soar above it, or extend the flight of our thoughts beyond its territories. Between the material and the spiritual world there is a wide ocean over which we cannot pass, unless conducted by Revelation. Whatever discoveries might have been made by the exercise of reason in the wonders of the material world, it is altogether certain that the mind never could have attained the idea of God's spirituality, or of its own immateriality and immortality. Hence we consider these doctrines concerning the Divine Being and man's immortal nature as above the discoveries of unaided reason, and matters of pure revelation.

Are we right in so doing? If we were incapable of reaching this conclusion by any argument based upon the known insufficiency of our mental powers — confined as they are to the material world — it were enough to know that the world did not entertain opinions concerning these things corresponding with their spirituality and importance until man was taught by Revelation. The ignorance of the most polished nations of antiquity with respect to Divine

knowledge is astonishing. Although they had made great advances in the sciences, in philosophy, in poetry, in oratory, and in the arts, yet they were profoundly ignorant of the true God, and of man's character and destiny. Their religion was a machinery of fabulous nonsense, which the more acute among them laughed at and ridiculed. Their philosophers and sages were confounded and overwhelmed in the mist and darkness of their own speculations. Even the existence of God was not certainly established, much less were His nature and attributes explained and understood. As for the doctrine of the soul's immortality, it was thought a probable doctrine by some, was controverted and denied by others, established by none; and as to the resurrection of the body from the grave, no philosopher ever dreamed of so glorious a truth. These facts in the case show that these truths were beyond discovery by reason.

Here, then, we have a system of doctrines of surpassing sublimity, superior to all others the world has ever known, explanatory of the mysteries which have staggered and confounded the wisest of men; and which, from their nature, are above the discoveries of reason. Now, whence came this wisdom? If the intelligence of the most acute philosophers could not discover and establish the first principles of true religion, if on all subjects pertaining to the spiritual world they were shrouded in darkness, whence have we obtained it? Can any mind suppose that a few poor, illiterate Galilean fishermen, with the son of a carpenter at their head, had exceeded in their philosophic discoveries the renowned sages of Greece and Rome?—that, unaided by the Divine power, they had soared above the discoveries of the whole world, nad

had succeeded in establishing a system of religious truths so excellent and divine? Really, to believe this requires far more credulity than to believe that these men were chosen by God and inspired to teach these glorious truths to the world; and the only inference to which the mind can come, when fairly and honestly it looks at the doctrines of the Bible, is that they are from above, that they are a part of a system of religion which has God for its author and the salvation of a lost race for its end.

A few remarks on this branch of the evidence of Divine Revelation will close this evening's lecture.

We have seen that the doctrines of Christianity, by their sublimity and transcendent superiority, commend themselves to our confidence as Divine: to believe them is therefore the duty of every man; to disbelieve them is to insult Jehovah. How can we expect to be virtuous and good if we turn away from these oracles of wisdom and grace? How can we be happy if amid the storms of life the star of Revelation guide not our frail bark over its troubled waters? With what emotions will we plunge into the waters of the river of death, and then reaching the spirit-shore, inhale the atmosphere of eternity, if on the soul lies the guilt of proudly leaning to our own understanding, instead of humbly believing in and practising the word of God?

O sinner, thou who art toying with the deceitful pleasures of sin! beware lest by an evil heart of unbelief thou art led to despise the Saviour, to thine own eternal overthrow. Thy position now is one of danger. True, could we but turn you away from your unbelief, and bring you as penitent at the altar of Divine mercy, the blessings of God in forgiveness and salvation might be secured; but this

you will not do. We fear you desire not the knowledge of God; you love your sins and the world; but we pray you to remember that the insulted sovereign of the world will be avenged! We warn you to remember this and *beware!*

Ah! you heed us not; you believe not the holy oracles: neither did the ante-diluvians believe Noah; yet the flood came, and swept with its descending and uprising waters their multitudes away: neither did the Jews believe Christ; yet the Roman army came, their city was utterly destroyed, and they scattered and dispersed: neither have scores of sinners believed the ministers of Jesus; yet when the sweat of death gathered on their brows, and the light of eternity gleamed on their dark spirits, they read their mistake and wickedness by the light of the flame that is never quenched. You believe not? What now? Sure as the stars shine out in the clear blue skies, and mountain and vale render beautiful and picturesque this rolling earth, so sure will the Word of God be true, and you will see its truth: in the chill and dimmed vision and startling desolation of a dying hour, you will see it; in the stern and terrible realities of the spirit-land, you will see it; n opening heavens, in the descending pomp of the Prince of Life, in the gathering of the multitudes to the judgment, in the quaking and consuming earth, in the falling of suns and stars, in the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, you will see it. But then, alas! Jesus having been despised, it would be too late to remedy the fatal error of life!

The Seasons, the Singers and their Songs:

A SERMON, PREACHED TO THE CONFERENCE ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 17, 1871, IN NEWARK, N. J.

By Rev. Josiah Varden.

"The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."—The Song of Solomon, ii: 12.

Cardinal De Retz, once a Minister of State, as well as a dignitary of the Church, had the misfortune to offend both the Pope and the King, by which offence he lost his place in the State and his power in the Church. In after years, whilst reflecting on the cause of his fall, he traced all his misery and degradation to a fact which, at the time appeared, the merest trifle in the world; but in view of the serious results which followed he gravely said: "There are no little things."

Now the passage just read may appear a "little thing," unmeaning, and hence unimportant; but every particle is a part of every whole, and essential to its completeness, so every word in this Book necessary to a perfect Bible. Hence, we should not view those Scriptures which speak of lilies and sparrows as insignificant, for they are not only figures clad, exponents of the truth; but singing birds and blooming flowers, brilliant stars and little children, are, perhaps, the purest, prettiest things in nature, and no one who loves them sincerely is irre-

deemably bad. Search, if you please, the records of crime, and you will find that few, if any, of the criminals who have suffered capital punishment, by hanging or otherwise, have ever been passionately fond of either birds or flowers. This arises from the fact that the love of these pure and gentle things is an elevating love, an emotion which so tenders and refines the heart that the gross and ungovernable passions which lead to murder are seldom felt, or if felt, suppressed as horrid and inhuman.

To encourage, then, the growth of this refining affection, as birds are mentioned in the text, we might give you, as introductory, an abbreviated history of these blessed little beauties, comprehending their names and numbers, their forms, range of flight, and mode of feeding, their plumage and pastime, their mating, music, and manner of migration, together with all other facts embraced in the science of ornithology. But the text does not call us to consider the *birds* so much as it does their *songs*, and not so much their *songs* as it does the *time* of their singing; for the passage reads, "The time of the singing of birds is come." In treating this subject we have, three things to consider, and these are *the Seasons*, *the Singers*, and *their Songs*.

I. *The Seasons.*

Of these there are two, one expressed and one implied. The first is thus described: "The *Winter* is past"; the second is the time when birds sing, and implies the *Spring*. Let us look at these seasons and learn their significance.

1. *Winter.*—This is the time of frost and snow and ice. The leaves have fallen and the flowers are dead; the frightened birds have fled, and from the fields

the sad, cold cattle come lowing for a shelter. The bleak winds sweep the plains and bellow through the hill-top forests. Deep-tinged and damp, the clouds hang dark above. The feathery snow falls thick and fast; and now the hills and dales, the good old woods, the garden-walks and silvery floods are one vast waste of gloom and solitude; for it is Winter. During this season the atmosphere is cold, the sky is stormy, the earth is unproductive, and vegetable life is partially, if not wholly, dead.

Now as matter has its winter, so has mind; and the winter of the soul is the season of sin. Sin, we are told, reigned from Adam to Moses. Oh what a winter! what a winter! Through this long, dreary, blasting winter, the affections of the heart are cold, the life is unproductive, the passions are stormy, and the soul is dead. This is not a fancy: no, it is a fearful fact. Are you what Paul calls "the natural man"—have never been converted, or "made anew in Christ Jesus"? Then, O man, O woman, it is winter with you!

Look within, and you will find that your affections are cold; nay, so frozen that they never warm with glowing gratitude to God. True, you see the silver rain come down to green the growing corn and fill the waving wheat with golden grain; then you are glad; glad of the grain, but not grateful to the Giver. Oh the world has so engrossed your love, you are so anxious for its wealth, so eager for its pleasures, so ambitious for its power, so proud of its gay pomp and its sweet praise, that though He gives Himself to you, you are too cold-hearted to accept the gift, or give yourself to Him as love's return for love! As to your life, it is but an unproductive Lapland, or a winter-blasted, barren fig-tree

— standing, it is true, on holy ground, yet bearing none of those good works which, as "fruit unto holiness," enrich and beautify a godly life. Then, see your passions too! Crossed, disappointed, and enraged by passing circumstances, like winter winds your angry passions rise; higher and still yet louder blows the blast, until at length the heart swelled to bursting, every nerve temper-torn, trembles with the rage, anger, and revenge which like a storm sweep over the winter-bound territories of your desolated nature.

But what about your soul? Paul says it is dead, killed by the winter of sin. True, you may admire gracious qualities in others; but then the holy thoughts and good desires from which these graces grow do not vegetate in you, for your soul is dead.

Dead to fear.— God has solemnly declared that thieves and drunkards, Sabbath breakers and blasphemers, liars, murderers, and licentious libertines shall be cast into hell. Now, with this gulf of fire at your feet, and God's all-crushing curse above your helpless head, how dare you do these deeds? You dare, only because you have no fear of God before your eyes. Alas! this saving sensiblity is dead.

Dead to hope — the hope of pardon and of peace. Dead to the new hope, the living hope, the glorious hope of living after death, and — pure as a lamb, harmless as a dove, bright as a star, and happy as an angel—spreading your brilliant wings, pass up from glory into glory, shining as you rise, and shouting as you shine, "Hosannah in the highest!" No, poor soul, it is dark, desperate, despairing winter with you, and this life-giving hope is dead. Poor souls! poor souls! What sad and lonely birds ye be! for though ye utter tones harmonious, or chirp poetic

words, during this unproductive, cold and stormy winter your hearts can sing no song of Zion.

2. *Spring.*— Surely winter, having quit the howling hills, and sent his ruffian blasts to northern regions, now the shattered forests and the ravaged vales, cheered by ethereal mildness, lift their hopeful faces to the bounteous sky, whilst trooping birds and swelling blossoms sweetly tell us spring is coming, and will soon be here.

O genial Spring, how welcome to our weary eyes! Cheered by its balmy breezes and its gorgeous sun, the vivid verdure runs o'er moistered meadows and o'er withered hills, till every tree and shrub and blade of grass grows gay with life. First come the crocus, the daisy, the primrose and the snowdrop; then the juicy groves put forth their buds, the leafy forests robe themselves in green. The gardens glow with all the colors of the rainbow; whilst from rosy morn till starry evening, birds and flowers fill the ambient air with fragrance and with song.

Oh how lovely is the soil, the sea and sky, all beautified by Spring! But oh how still more lovely is a Spring-clad soul; for as matter has its Spring, so has mind. Yes, the soul immortal has its Spring, a Spring whose sun scatters from his noonday all the wintry clouds of unbelief, and darting his penetrating rays down into the dark retreats of secret sins, destroys the various vices which vex the mind with endless storms, warms the heart with lovely, kind and gentle tempers, and so beautifies the life with holy hope and heavenly joy that the soul, long winter-bound, blooms like a flower and sings like a bird.

But when is it Spring? We answer, the Spring of the soul is the *season of grace*, for "by grace are ye saved." This grace or favor of God, whether it

comes to us through His Word, His Spirit, or His Providence; still grace is the cheering sun, the genial air, the enriching rain, which bring on Spring. Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, throws in upon the frozen heart the rays of truth, "Repent and be converted." "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Through these words, or through some providential circumstance, the Holy Spirit acts upon our consciousness, and Spring begins. It opens, however, not as in nature, with the shooting up of snowdrops, but with falling tear-drops, tear-drops of "Godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto life." Then come buds of *good desire;* and though small at first, enlarged by prayer, they continue to expand, until, at length, they burst into the perfect flower of faith. "Being justified by faith."

Spring advances. The cold affections now grow warm and still yet warmer both to God and man; and as the affections warm, the life grows beautiful with holy deeds; and as the life grows lovely, the stormy passions one by one subside and sink to silence; then comes the peace that passeth knowledge; and as this calm increases, the soul invigorated by internal sanctity, man assumes all the rich enchanting charms of nature in its spring-time glory.

Now, whether this change from winter into spring is marked by shouting joy, weeping gratitude, or merely by the peace of pardon, is not material to the fact; for some Springs commence with thunder storms, some with gentle showers, others on sunny days, clear and peaceful; and yet it is spring. So you may weep whilst others shout, and yet your change of heart be just as real. But whether brought in youth or age, the thing important is, the change.

Oh, friendship, wealth and health and life, what precious things they be; yet this great globe is graced with nothing half so precious as this inward consciousness—*I love God, and God loves me.*

See, men and brethren, see the Sun of Righteousness is rising! Oh, open wide, freely open your bosoms to His beams; and may God this day change our Winter into Spring; and, enraptured with the bliss and beauty of your re-created nature, may your transported spirit cry: "The time of the singing of the birds is come."

II. *The Singers.*

Those named in the text are birds. Oh the birds! the birds!—

> "Gay warblers of the sunny hours,
> At rest, or on the wing;
> I love them as I love the flowers,
> The sunlight and the Spring."

Indeed I do not see how anybody could refrain from loving birds. I am sure God does, for Jesus says: "They neither reap nor gather into barns, yet your Heavenly Father feeds them." And if He loves them, why may not we? The happy, harmless creatures—why, the worst they do is to eat a little fruit or take a portion of the seed we sow. But what if they do take a few berries for their breakfast, or any other meal, it is theirs as much as it is ours; and were it wholly ours, they repay us fully for their food by the songs they sing us and the insects they destroy.

There is the blue-bird, the robin, and the wren, with all their fellow-choristers—and oh, what a world of music God has hidden in their blessed breasts!—amid the dews of the morning and evening's mist, pouring out their melody as if they knew it was from heaven—

"From clime to clime, from pole to pole,
Their varied anthems softly roll;
Whilst sweetly to our listening ear
The bird-song whispers — GOD is here."

But all the birds are not singers. There are owls and vultures, described in Deuteronomy as "unclean birds." Owls, instead of singing, spend life in prowling after prey by night, eating smaller birds that sleep; whilst vultures, though mighty ones for soaring, can light low, and live on carrion.

Now, human beings are in Scripture repeatedly compared to birds. So Isaiah the prophet represents himself, saying: "I did mourn as a dove;" to which David adds: "I am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top." But whilst some men are compared to doves and sparrows, others are spoken of as owls and vultures; for instance, in the 46th chap. of Isaiah, God, in speaking of the King of Persia who is to destroy Babylon, says: "I will call a ravenous bird from the east, even the man that executeth my counsels from a far country." So to this day there are men and women who, instead of being singing birds, are mere owls and vultures in society — owls that slyly steal about in darkness, hooting at religion, or peering into every heart in order to devour the holy thoughts or tender graces they may chance to find in any friend or neighbor's soul; whilst others are vultures, moral vultures, who, assuming airs, fly high in ethereal reason, then swooping down upon the poor, the ignorant, the unfortunate or fallen, they feed on their infirmities and fatten on their faults, as if nothing but the worst traits, nay the very rottenness of humanity could do them any good. Shame on us! shame on us that we should thus be cormorants, biting and devouring one another.

Now, as birds and human beings are the only creatures on the earth to whom God has given the power of song, instead of crossing, fretting, insulting, mortifying, and pursuing each other with angry words and wicked acts, as alas! we do, how much better it would be for us like doves to coo songs of love and sorrow over the misfortunes of one another, or like mocking-birds pour out our varied notes of friendship to enchant and cheer the troubled hearts around us.

"Oh if our souls were never stirred
By harsher sounds than these,
The low sweet singing of a bird
Amid the blooming trees,
How soft would glide our fleeting hours,
Blessed as the sunshine and the flowers,
And calm as summer seas;
Linked hand in hand with love and hope,
We'd wander down life's flowery slope,
Then dove-like, rise to heaven.

III. *Their Songs.*

No philologist can give in words the meaning of the birds. But as God taught them how, when, where, and what to sing, He can understand them; and as it is expressly said "He made all things for His glory," there can be no doubt that they answer the end of their creation by glorifying Him with songs of praise, singing —

1. *Songs of gratitude for the past.* They do not, like brave troubadours returned from wars, report to us in song where they have been, with all they have seen and suffered since they left; yet the very glee of their singing does, in a language understood at least by our hearts, tell us plainly that they are glad, nay grateful—grateful that winter, with its cheerless days and long cold nights, has passed, grateful that they have not perished, been entrapped, died of hun-

ger, or been lost in foreign parts. True, they do not tell us this in words; but God understands their language, for amid all earthly sounds He knows the voices of "young ravens when they cry." And David, inspired with the wisdom from above, understood them as returning thanks to God; hence, whilst listening to their songs he gladly cried, "Let all the birds that sing among the branches praise the Lord."

And if these little birds, for their shelter and supplies, offer to their great preserver hymns of praise, oh! with what songs, what glowing songs of gratitude should we, immortal men and women, praise the Lord!

Look back, my brethren, look back upon the past, and as God said to Abraham, "Tell the number of the stars if thou be able." Oh how numerous! and what millions of created beings dwell in these bright and distant worlds! As then there are so many worlds to claim God's notice, and so many beings to enlist His love, how grateful should we be that He, the Almighty One, should think of us at all! "How can it be, thou wondrous King?" But when this great Jehovah assumes our nature, and in human form comes down into this wretched world, that He, through Jesus, might throw light on darkness, purify the guilty, cheer the sad, prepare the dying for their change, and open up, from death's dark doors, bright avenues of safety to the gorgeous glories of His personal abode, in endless bliss, we see displayed a love for our lost souls which calls for songs of loudest praise.

Look, too, along life's path through childhood, youth, and age; and seeing the dangers of wealth or poverty through which His hand has led us,

well may we cry "O praise the Lord!" for if we have endured some evils, He has blessed us with a thousand good things by the way. And, then, again, as there were years of wickedness through which we did not even care for God, oh! how great His mercy that He never ceased to care for us — ceased to love us! No! no! blessed be His name! instead of treating us with that indifference with which we treated Him, scarcely a single day has passed that He did not visit our souls, and in some way warn us of danger and advise us for our good. And the memory of His love for, His patience with us, should induce every man and every woman and all the children in this house to sing aloud, nay shout with David, "O my soul, praise the Lord!"

Fellow-Christians, we have seen dark days and suffered many a sore temptation, but now that "the time of the singing of the birds has come," let us gratefully sing of the past. In the midst of affliction my table was spread with blessings unnumbered, my cup it ran over; with perfume and oil He anointed my head. Oh what could I ask of His Providence more?

But why, you ask, why urge us thus to gratitude? We answer, because gratitude is the most amiable feeling of the human heart. It existed in Paradise when there was no fault to deplore, and will be perpetuated in heaven when "God is all in all."

2. *Songs of happy content for the present.* If the fruit be perfect in the bosom of the blossom, the birds are happy; but if frosted, the fruit should fall, and all the bloom be blown away, they are equally contented. If the morning should be bright, how merrily they sing; but if perchance there comes a sweeping thunder-storm, they hide among the

meadow-grass or shelter in the trees. Then when the rain is over and the sun comes smiling through the clouds, without complaining of the tempest they sing on — sing on as if assured the grain was growing, and that He who said no sparrow falls without My notice, watched their wants, and would, when they were needy, send them food.

Oh, would to God, my hearers, we could sing this song! Impossible! say you? No, not impossible; for Paul said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." Then why not we? Intellectually, morally, civilly, and socially we are blest above the birds; and Paul, our brother, had no greater reasons for contentment than ourselves. Behold our heritage! What majestic forests, splendid bays, rippling rills, and flowing rivers! Wheat in the valleys and corn on the hills, gold in the rocks and silver in the sands, and over all a God who has mercifully said, "Your bread shall be given and your water sure." O Lord, send down the Holy Ghost, and let its tongue of fire teach us "in every state to be content." True, we may suffer and be denied the beauty, wealth, and health of others; yet still we may be happy; for —

> "In this the art of living lies,
> To want no more than may suffice,
> And make that little do."

I entreat you, then, "Submit yourselves to God"—

> "Content in Him is wisdom's part;
> It is that incense of the heart
> Whose fragrance smells to heaven."

3. *Songs of hope for the future.* Now when the summer birds have done their work of praise, built their nests and raised their little ones; forced by

winter to forsake the fields and forests where in love they have labored, they sweetly to each other warble their adieus, seemingly saying, in songs of hope, "Friends, we'll meet again;" then singly, or in flocks, by various routes, they fly away to equatorial groves, to meet and mingle 'mid the orange-blossoms and spicy odors of some sunny island in the Southern seas.

So, my hearers, should we, in Christ, sings ongs of hope. For driven off by death — the Winter of sin — many who once were with us and were ours, ours to love, admire, and enjoy, have escaped from the fowler and fled. But are they dead? No; they live with Jesus; and in that new Paradise beyond the river, where the trees are ever green, the waters pure, the air balmy, and the sky blue, these all-immortal, like the birds of Solomon, covered with silver and feathered with yellow gold, they rise from glory to glory, shining brighter, soaring higher, and waxing louder in their songs. They sweetly sing, "Forever with the Lord."

Then let us sing our songs of hope, for we too shall soon take wings like a dove. Hark! already in the distance is the sound of coming Winter. Oh that when the time of our departure comes, grace may tune our mellow throats to songs of victory; and bidding earth a glad farewell, mount up to Eden on our glittering wings, float by the golden gate, and hear the angels sing; then entering, join our friends above, to sing that song of songs, Redeeming love! And now, if the singing of the birds has done you any good, then praise the Lord.

13
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